THOUGHTS

ON THE

DIVINE GOODNESS,

RELATIVE TO THE

Government of *Moral Agents*,

PARTICULARLY DISPLAYED IN

Future Rewards and Puniſhments.

God our Saviour will have all men to be ſaved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 2 Tim. ii. 4.

Tranſlated from the FRENCH of

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BATH:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY S. HAZARD;

SOLD ALSO BY

G. G. J. and J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-ROW,

AND

J. JOHNSON, St. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

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ERRATA.

Page 18, Prelim. Disc. l. 15, for deduceable read deducible, p. 10, l. 3, unsubscribed r. uncircumscribed, p. 11, l. 7, independant r. independent. p. 14, l. 7, irresistable r. irresistible. p. 16, l. 1, omnisence r. omniscience. p. 17. l. 11, existant r. existent. p. 20, l. 18, begotton r. begotten. p. 43, l. 15, incomprensible r. incomprehensible. p. 45. l. 20, passion r. passions. p. 95, l. 20, omnicient r. omniscient, l. 22, begining r. beginning. p. 110, l. 6, punish r. perish. p. 112, l. 18, to r. of. p. 122, l. 14, their r. our. p. 123, l. 7, plamist r. psalmist. p. 127, l. 127, l. 15, incompatable r. incompatible. p. 194, l. 5, connected r. unconnected, l. 24, r. He has. p. 198, l. 3, r. deprives us. p. 205, l. 9, immence r. immense. p. 207, l. 6, assertain r. ascertain.

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PREFACE

OF THE

TRANSLATOR.

THE translator of the following pages having witnessed the approbation they met with abroad, the ardor with which they were sought, and the difficulty with which they were obtained; thinks it may be rendering service to the cause of religion, and contributing to the happiness of mankind to make them easy of access; in a nation distinguished by its literature, and which in theology and philosophy has produced so many luminaries.

The author, a native of Neufchâtel, *must be well known to many in this country, having resided in its capital for several years. All, who*

who were acquainted with him there, or in Switzerland, admired and honored him. If in his tenets he differs from those universally held in the Christian, even protestant churches, the candid and judicious reader will not be repulsed by the cry of heresy, for it is to truths thus stigmatized, that the reformation owed its rise. Let them read, examine, and determine for themselves.

Nor let the humble pious follower of the gospel take the alarm, or apprehend the motives to virtue will be weakened, and mankind grow more licentious. To behold the plan of the Deity, as more consistent with his nature and attributes, and more merciful to his creatures, can never be an incentive to vice. Fear, *is indeed one powerful restraint on imperfect beings, but it must be a rational fear, and not such as has given rise to infidelity in thousands, or which, if believed, leads to despair. Besides, let me ask, Have the terrors of the Lord, when represented in all the horrors of never ending misery, been sufficient to deter many from offending, who have been familiar*

with the idea from their infancy? Universal observation shews the contrary. Our Saviour draws us by the cords of love. *But if there is a wretch so base* as to sin because grace has abounded, *and with dauntless effrontery ventures to challenge the power and justice of his Maker—let him learn that in proportion to his guilt and depravity, will be his future punishment both in degree and duration. But let the honor of the wise and merciful Creator be vindicated, and mankind be taught to consider him as altogether amiable; whose severities are as much the effect of his goodness, as his rewards. Thus shall his love, and his fear arise together in our hearts, thus will He be known, and honored,* and wisdom be justified of her children.

Thirst of fame is disregarded by one who remains concealed, but though I wish to derive no personal merit as a translator, I would carefully avoid diminishing that *of the author; to whose sentiments it shall be my endeavor to do justice, by a faithful but not a tedious translation. All who are conversant with the*

 nature

nature of the French language, know that it admits of a certain declamatory ſtyle which they call unction, *and which does not ſo well correſpond with the genius of the Engliſh. Entirely to diveſt this work of its original idiom, would perhaps be to rob it of that ſpirit and energy, by which the author has diſtinguiſhed it. The reader is therefore ſolicited, if in the courſe of this tranſlation ſome deviations from the eſtabliſhed mode of Engliſh diction ſhould be found unavoidable; candidly to place them to this account. They will occur as ſeldom as poſſible, for though nobler motives than gratifying the ear by the harmony of flowing periods; actuate the perſon who gives this eſſay to the public, yet, as far as ſenſe and ſound can be conciliated, the tranſlator would not wiſh to deprive it even of that recommendation.*

Preliminary Discourse.

TO render mankind universally and perfectly happy, seems to be the plan on which the Supreme Creator, has established his moral government: and the method he employs to compass an end so worthy of its author; *is that of enlightening their minds.* From whence it follows, that from the knowledge of this plan, may be derived just views of that felicity which the greatest and best of beings, has graciously intended to dispense to the children of men; and of the means by which he will conduct them to it, *the knowledge of the truth.*

This system is clearly expressed in that passage of scripture, which I have made choice of in the title of this work, where the apostle'

apoſtle declares that, *God will have all men to be ſaved:* this is their deſtination, *and to come at the knowledge of the truth,* is the mean; by which he will raiſe them to it. I therefore dedicate the following pages to the examination and developement of theſe ſublime words of St. Paul.

The plan of God towards mankind, is in nothing different from religion itſelf conſidered in its theory. For though religion taken in a general view is the ſcience of happineſs and of ſalvation, yet it may be divided into the two branches, of *theory* and *practice.* In its theory it holds up to us, ſalvation as the deſtination to which God by his providence and grace calls us: thus far it is the plan of our Great Creator, which I ſhall endeavor to illuſtrate in this work. But when taken in a practical view, it ſhews us ſalvation as the grand end we are invariably to propoſe to ourſelves, and to which we are conſtantly to tend, by exerting all our efforts to the enlightening of our underſtandings, and the ſanctifying of our hearts.

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In this point of view, religion is that part of his plan which the Supreme Being has affigned to us, that we may fubmit with docility to his government, and thereby become worthy of his benevolent defigns towards us, or, as the apoftle expreffes it, *be workers together with him.*

Though the practical part of religion is of fuch fuperior importance, that even the moft perfect theory feparated from it is fo totally ufelefs, that St. James reprefents a faith of that nature as dead. Yet it is of the theory of religion that I mean to treat, as *that* is incomparably more corrupted and disfigured by error, as I fhall fhew by explaining my reafons more particularly.

Although mankind are univerfally made capable of knowing the truth, their progrefs towards it is flow and obftructed by many difficulties, and amidft their almoft imperceptible advances, ignorance, imagination, and paffion, have leifure fufficient left them, *to change the truth of God into a*

lye,

lye,[a] that is to corrupt and falsify the first ideas of truth, even though revealed by himself. Their primitive ignorance renders them strangely presumptuous and decisive, their gross imagination, obscuring reason, has served them as a guide, insinuating itself as a judge of things spiritual, which belong exclusively to the more noble faculty of the mind.

But above all, self-love, temporal interest, sloth, vanity, pride, and a long list of other corrupt passions; make them deviate and wander through a maze of the most absurd, and sometimes the most monstrous errors; which they never fail to associate with the truths of religion, however incompatible. And as these errors are the unhappy effect of passion, they are afterwards supported by it. How often do men maintain them with a warmth bordering on fury, and impose them on the faith of others, with an inhuman ferocity,

[a] Rom. i. 25.

rocity, deciding for the reſt of mankind, and even for poſterity, by a plurality of voices, what they ſhall in future be obliged to believe, or profeſs as the truth revealed by God, under pain of damnation in the world to come, and frequently of the moſt cruel ſufferings in this. Such are the bitter fruits, the ſad but inevitable effects of the ignorance, the imagination, and the paſſions of mankind, even under that diſpenſation of light which God has vouchſafed them. Deplorable effects! which by the obſtinate deiſt, are charged upon religion itſelf. What I have ſaid on the corruption of truth in the hands of man, is no more than what fatal experience has proved more or leſs in every age.

To what elſe are we to aſcribe that ſtrange fatality, by which we ſee the abſurd ſide of queſtions, though never ſo revolting and extravagant, prevailing over the ſimple, natural, and rational; almoſt wherever they have been agitated? Such abſurd errors when once received, and conſecrated by public authority, and by their antiquity,

become

become the formidable obſtacles of truth, and gain ſuch a fatal aſcendency even over the minds of thoſe whoſe underſtandings reject them, as leads them to ſuppreſs the truth, and tacitly to immolate it at the ſhrine of falſhood, by impoſing upon it the moſt rigorous ſilence; leaving to error, known to be ſuch; the excluſive priviledge of appearing publickly, and of perpetuating itſelf by being openly and freely taught to the multitude. And can the ſacred rights of truth be thus miſconceived! I ſay miſconceived, for who that properly knows their value, can dare to trample them under foot? but when we reflect on the obſtacles ſhe meets with, may we not be tempted for a moment to believe, as ſome have boldly advanced, that ſhe was of a nature too ſublime and elevated for man; who inſtead of being formed capable of receiving her, was made the eternal, and melancholy ſport of ignorance and error. But far be from us a thought ſo contrary to the plan of infinite wiſdom; *who wills that all men ſhould be ſaved, and come at the knowledge of the truth*, conſequently he has created

them

them for it, notwithſtanding their original ignorance, their groſs imaginations, and turbulent paſſions.

Now, it is on the theory of religion that the evils reſulting from the above cauſes have principally fallen: its admirable morality has better reſiſted the contagion: though when we ſee on the one hand a thouſand dangerous illuſions and ſuperſtitions, corrupting its purity, and on the other, the motives to virtue, which are the very eſſence of morality, and are derived from its theory, perverted, enfeebled, enervated, and almoſt annihilated; we muſt lament that it has not wholly eſcaped the infection. What then can be more neceſſary than to diſencumber religion from the errors which corrupt it, and to preſent it to mankind in its primitive purity! this ſhall be my endeavor in this treatiſe, by faithfully diſplaying *the eternal plan of divine government as made known by God himſelf, both by nature and revelation.*

It is in this two-fold manner, that the ſource of all truth has communicated to us the ſcheme of his mercy. Firſt, by a *natural revelation*, by which He enlightens our reaſon, in offering to its contemplation, the admirable works of creation. Secondly, by a *ſupernatural revelation*, by which He condeſcends to ſupply the original weakneſs of our rational powers, and gives us his word; as a more perfect and more efficacious aſſiſtance.

It is to our reaſon that God addreſſes himſelf in both theſe revelations; with this capital difference however, that in the former, what we know of the being, perfections, and deſigns of God, muſt be deduced from the contemplation of nature, and reſult from our own diſcoveries: whereas in the latter, we muſt only attend with humility, and docility, and comprehend him who ſpeaks for the purpoſe of enlightening us; for reaſon cannot be benefited by what it does not underſtand.

The queſtion why God has revealed himſelf in theſe two ways is not proper to be diſcuſſed here; one very remarkable obſervation may however be made, which is founded on their perfect agreement. For as the deſign of our Creator is to bring us to the knowledge of the truth, it is impoſſible that he ſhould deceive his creatures, and not be himſelf the *God of all truth:* conſequently his revelations far from contradicting each other, muſt be found in perfect harmony.

But as God has manifeſted himſelf to us in his works, and in his word, it is in theſe two ſacred ſources, and in theſe alone, that we are to ſeek for the knowledge of his plan, and not in the opinions of our fellow mortals, which are ſo different, and often ſo oppoſite. We may, and we certainly ought to conſult them, and examine carefully the reaſons on which they are grounded, in order to profit by their labours, and uſe them as ſuccours for the better comprehending our Maker, but it is God, and God alone, to whom we are obliged indiſpenſibly to at-

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tend; and by the touchſtone of reaſon and ſcripture, muſt every human opinion be tried.

When we conſult reaſon for the proper underſtanding of holy writ, we draw at once from theſe two ſources. When, for inſtance, any paſſage there is ſuſceptible, by the ambiguity of its expreſſion, of two different meanings, becauſe, the ſame term may ſometimes have a literal, and ſometimes a figurative ſenſe annexed to it, it is then the province of reaſon to determine which of the two is the ſenſe of the paſſage in queſtion, by adopting that which agrees with the nature of things, of God, of man; and rejecting that which is un-natural, abſurd, and falſe. Such is the uſe we are to make of reaſon, in the interpretation of ſcripture.

And here I ſolemnly proteſt, in the preſence of the Almighty, that in reading and meditating on his word, to know his will and deſigns towards us, I have with ſincerity, and in his fear, adhered to this rule, I have

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ſought truth in its purity, with ſimplicity of heart, without hope, or fear, of its agreeing or diſagreeing, with that catechiſm which I had been taught to receive in my youth, without ſufficient examination; well convinced, that if ſuch, or ſuch opinions were true, I ſhould find them confirmed in ſcripture; if falſe, they would not become true, by my obſtinately perſiſting to believe them without examination; ſo that I had nothing to loſe, or rather I had every thing to gain, by bringing them ſincerely to this teſt; ſince the only thing of importance to me was to fly from error, and *to come at the knowledge of the truth.*

And this impartial ſtudy of ſcripture has been attended with great advantage to me. It has confirm'd and eſtabliſhed me in ſome of my former opinions, which I have found to be divine truths, and opened my eyes upon others, which I have perceived to be the offspring of prejudice, and error.

It has certainly expoſed me to ſome temporal inconvenience, in the exerciſe of my eccleſiaſtical functions; as inſtead of examining the truth, or falſhood, of my doctrine, the clergy condemned me to ſilence; which being contrary to the dictates of my conſcience, was followed by my depoſition. Thus circumſtanced, I was obliged to ſeek in a foreign country that protection and independence, which my own refuſed me. The ſucceſs of my endeavours having placed me above the reach of temporal cares, I devote the leiſure with which providence has bleſſed me, to the intereſt of truth, and the benefit of mankind, adhering ſcrupulouſly throughout this work to the rules I have laid down, conſulting only reaſon and the word of God, and advancing nothing, but what appears to me, agreeable to theſe guides; convinced that were I to violate this ſacred obligation, I ſhould be guilty of the moſt audacious and criminal prevarication.

As I diſclaim all other authorities, however uſeful to my ſubject; ſo I equally re-

nounce all perſonal controverſy; and confine myſelf entirely to the combat between truth, and error.

I mean not however by theſe proteſtations to prepoſſeſs the world in favor of my tenets. I have laid down the only rules by which they muſt ſtand, or fall; therefore ſetting aſide the prejudices of education, and carefully examining what I ſhall advance, let every one judge, and determine for themſelves. Whoever proceeds otherwiſe, can never read with advantage, not even ſcripture itſelf: but reſembles thoſe whom St. Paul deſcribes, as *ever learning, and never able to come at the knowledge of the truth,* as the maſs of prejudices, form that veil upon the heart, with which the ſame apoſtle reproaches the Jews; and which made a learned divine of this century obſerve, in a latin epigram on the bible, *That it was a book where every one ſought his opinions, and where every one found them.* This has given occaſion to the deiſt to reproach revelation with obſcu-

rity: whereas the whole of religion if it may be refolved, into the defigns of God towards his creatures, and what he requires of them towards the rendering them fit objects of his favor; is fufficiently clear to all, who with the docility of little children will liften to its inftructions, and obey its dictates.

It may appear to fome neceffary previous to my prefent undertaking, that I fhould prove the divine authority of that revelation on which it depends. But this fubject has been fo frequently, and fo ably treated by numbers, that I think it needlefs to enter upon it again, any farther than its celeftial origin may be deduceable by every candid mind, from the beauty, grandeur, and harmony of a defign; which comprehending fo many ages fince the beginning of the world, cannot be the production of an impoftor: which is a fufficient internal proof of its divinity.

Religion has, in our age, fuftained on every fide a multitude of attacks from different

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ferent quarters, and under every diſguiſe; which as they have occaſioned the diſcuſſion of many important queſtions; have led to an examination favourable to the cauſe of truth. The objections of the deiſts to chriſtianity are of two kinds: the one, levelled againſt its external proofs and documents, ſuch as the miracles, and prophecies it contains; the other, relating to its ſubſtance, and attacking its doctrines whether of theory, or practice. With reſpect to the former, they have been anſwered in a manner that has turned to the advantage of religion: but I am far from being able to ſay as much of the replies that have been offered in defence of its doctrines; here the combatants have not ſtood on equal ground, for its advocates in vindicating the dogmas of religion, have thought themſelves obliged to maintain them, not in the ſimplicity of holy writ, but as they were taught in different communions of chriſtians, and repreſented in the creeds and confeſſions of their churches; hence a number of objections to which no ſatisfactory anſwer has ever been

given, becaufe on thofe terms they are abfolutely infurmountable, fince it is impoffible to make light agree with darknefs. To give but one example of thefe triumphant objections: how can it even be made comprehenfible that a being infinitely good can confign the greateft part of his creatures over to never ending torments? it is however neceffary that thefe objections of the fecond clafs fhould be anfwered, and that religion fhould be difengaged from every thing that may tarnifh and obfcure its luftre. For as long as it fhall prefent a hideous mixture of truth and error, it cannot carry with it that light and evidence, which are neceffary to convince the underftanding, and gain the heart, but will expofe men to baneful illufions, cruel doubts, and even to the fatal danger of falling at length into incredulity, and irreligion.

With refpect to the form of this work, I am not folicitous to clothe it in the ornaments of flowery language; fimplicity, perfpicuity, and evidence, have ever appeared more at-

tractive in my eyes. I confide in the majesty, and importance of my subject to interest my reader, and captivate his attention. And what subject can be more sublime than to explain *the plan of God, and his counsels towards man!* August by its *author;* precious and interesting by its *object;* luminous and harmonious by *the value of its materials, and the beauty of its structure;* elevated and delightful by its *tendency;* and sovereignly glorious and marvellous by *the amazing difficulty of its execution, and by the magnificence of its effects. Its author;* is He who is infinitely wise, good, and powerful; its *object;* is the universal and final happiness of the whole human race, without exception of a single individual; the *rich materials that compose it;* are those magnificent truths that go hand in hand, and by a natural connection, form the most beautiful whole that an intelligent being can possibly contemplate. *Its tendency;* that of bringing us all to the highest perfection, and the utmost happiness of which our natures are susceptible. *And the difficulty of its execution, and the magnifi-*

cence of its effects; no other, than rendering the human race, ſuch as they have ſhewn themſelves from the foundation of the world to the preſent moment; a race of beings plunged in the moſt profound darkneſs; loſt in the moſt monſtrous errors; degraded and tyrannized by the moſt diſorderly and violent paſſions; odious by the moſt horrid and deteſtable crimes; unhappy, in their phyſical and moral ſtate, by all theſe ſources of dreadful miſery; it is nothing leſs, than to render ſuch beings, enlightened, rational and pure in their ſentiments; amiable by every virtue, excellent by every action, and happy by their perfection, their celeſtial ſtate, and above all by their glorious union with God himſelf! Of how little moment will the ornaments of diction appear to any one convinced of the importance, and elevated by the dignity of the ſubject. May its divine energy penetrate my heart, and I ſhall not fear of making my labours uſeful, and acceptable to the world.

OF THE

Infinite Goodneſs of GOD, *&c.*

God is Love. 1 John iv. 8.

IT is not neceſſary in a work of this nature, to enter into a complete detail on the exiſtence and perfections of God; any farther than as they enable us to judge with certainty of his deſigns towards us. And His *infinite goodneſs* being the leading principle in the creation and government of moral agents; it is to the particular inveſtigation of this goodneſs, I mean to confine myſelf principally, though I ſhall touch on His other perfections, when by ſo doing I can throw light upon my ſubject: which will be divided into three chapters; containing the *definition*, *proofs*, and *conſequences* of the infinite goodneſs of God.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Definition of the infinite goodneſs of God.

THE infinite goodneſs of God is that conſtant diſpoſition of his will; by which he determines to beſtow upon his creatures, as much happineſs as their natures are capable of admitting. And here we muſt diſtinguiſh four things, viz. the *nature*, the *deſign*, the *duration*, and the *effects* of this divine benevolence. And

Firſt, In *its nature*, it is an invariable diſpoſition, a conſtant, unalterable, in a word, an immutable goodneſs.

Secondly, *Its deſign*; to confer *good*, nothing *but good*, pure from every mixture of evil, and even *all poſſible good*; that is to

ſay,

ſay, all the good that ſuch a Being can diſpenſe, and that the creature, who is the object of it, can receive.

Thirdly, *Its duration*, which is boundleſs as eternity; for goodneſs to be infinite, muſt never ceaſe from doing all the good it can, and conſequently in an Eternal Being, muſt be exerted eternally.

Fourthly, *Its effects*, not only extend to all the intelligent beings of the univerſe, but even to all the creatures capable of diſtinguiſhing between pleaſure and pain, for the divine goodneſs could not be infinite, if it did not embrace his immenſe family of ſentient, as well as rational beings. But I ſhall here only conſider that branch of it, which relates to man; becauſe it is to human beings, that ſcripture calls our attention more particularly; and becauſe it is infinitely more important to comprehend the deſigns of infinite benevolence towards us, whoſe duty it is to make ſuitable returns of love, and obedience.

But here an objection may be ſtarted which merits examination. May not all the beings in the univerſe be ſo connected in the general ſcheme of divine government, which embraces all in one compendious whole, as not to permit the ſeparating a part, from the general ſyſtem, in which, infinite wiſdom may make one race of beings ſubſervient to the greater, or general good of the reſt?

That infinite goodneſs does, and ought to prefer a general, to a particular advantage, I am ready to allow; and therefore that He can expoſe one, or many of his creatures to a temporary evil, however great, when it is neceſſary to procure the good of a ſuperior number. This, far from being inconſiſtent with the propoſition I advance, is agreeable to the nature of intelligent creatures, and to the happineſs correſponding therewith: As I hope to make it appear, that the ſufferings inflicted for the good of others, will, ſooner or later, procure an encreaſe of happineſs to the individual who endured them; ſo that in the end he will perceive and acknowledge

himſelf to be a gainer, by having thus contributed to the welfare of others.

But when by a ſtrange ſuppoſition, which has not the leaſt foundation, either in the nature of intelligent beings, or their happineſs, we advance, that the infinite or eternal miſery, not of a multitude, but even of an individual, muſt take place to procure the good of the reſt; then it is evident that perfect benevolence can never admit ſo horrid a method into his plan: becauſe in ſo doing he muſt commit an act of unjuſt and partial cruelty; an act, barbarous and tyrannical in reſpect to one creature, in order to procure the happineſs of others. No, the Being infinitely good, cannot at the ſame time be infinitely cruel; the deteſtable reaſon of ſuperior ſtrength is no argument with him; His goodneſs is true and genuine, conſequently impartial, and univerſal. He poſſeſſes in the inexhauſtible treaſures of his wiſdom and power, ſufficient ſources of felicity for all his creatures; without being reduced to the dreadful expedient of making ſome the victims

of

of others, or adopting means repugnant to the ſimpleſt ideas of goodneſs, and utterly incongruous with thoſe we ought to entertain of the merciful and kind parent of the univerſe: who repreſents himſelf to us as tenderly concerned for the happineſs of his children; which St. Paul calls, *the kindneſs and love of God towards men*, or as it is rendered in the original, *the philanthropy* of God. Are men miſerable? it is termed *that infinite compaſſion*, he has for their wretchedneſs: are they irregular and vicious? it aſſumes the titles of *forbearance*, *long-ſuffering*, and *patience*; but when by a ſincere repentance they turn from their iniquity, then, it is his *clemency*, his *pardon*, his *mercy*, and his *grace*, that is extended towards them.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Proofs of the infinite goodneſs of God.

TO the proper demonſtrating of this important, and fundamental principle, I muſt eſtabliſh it on two evident proofs, one drawn from reaſon, the other from ſcripture.

And in doing this I ſhall ſhew, that it is impoſſible to form to ourſelves, juſt notions of the adorable goodneſs of the governor of the univerſe; unleſs we endeavour to know his other perfections. We muſt therefore conſider Him, firſt, as the original cauſe of all things; and ſecondly, deduce from thence, his right to the character of the beſt, and moſt excellent of Beings.

If *God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth*, he muſt be the original cauſe

of the univerſe: *a Being exiſting of himſelf, from whom all other beings derive exiſtence:* this idea muſt naturally preſent itſelf, when we aſcend from the effect to the cauſe, and from this definition, which is certainly inconteſtible, we are led by a neceſſary concluſion, to the diſcovery of all his other perfections. It contains two important ideas; the one relative to the manner of *his own independent exiſtence;* the other, *to his agency, as the creator of all other beings.* All the attributes we diſcover in God muſt depend on one, or other of theſe ideas; and ariſe either from his own ſelf-exiſtent nature or belong to his character as Creator, it is impoſſible to ſeperate them. For if God is the ſpring and fountain of life, he cannot have derived it from any, but in a word *exiſts neceſſarily.* The ſame is true of all his attributes as Creator, ſuch as he is, he has ever been, the perfections of his nature are eternal, conſequently *exiſt neceſſarily in him;* ſo that the ſupreme Being is both in his nature, and perfections, *eternal, independent, immutable,* and *infinite.*

Firſt,

First, He is *eternal,* for having received nothing, he cannot poſſibly ſuffer any privation; and as he knew no commencement, he can know no end. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

Secondly, *His abſolute independence* flows from the ſame premiſes, and ſcripture everywhere abounds with the moſt poſitive declarations of this truth. *Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makeſt thy ways perfect?*

Thirdly, That the Moſt High is *immutable* in his being and perfections, is equally evident from his independent nature, which precludes every poſſibility of change; *He is always the ſame, the father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning.*

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

Fourthly, I have advanced that *God in his nature, and attributes, as our Creator, is infinite*, unſubſcribed, unlimited. If his perfections are immutable, and can neither admit of increaſe or diminution, they are now what they have ever been, and what they will be throughout all eternity, *infinite*. If he poſſeſſes knowledge, it muſt pervade all things; if power, it muſt be uncontroled; if goodneſs, it muſt extend to *all;* and will the greateſt and moſt univerſal happineſs. Such are the ſublime ideas comprehended in *neceſſary exiſtence.*

Let us for a moment contemplate this unfathomable, this aſtoniſhing Being, who ſits ſupreme, without rival or competitor; to raiſe our thoughts to Him, is to elevate them to the *Being of Beings*, the ſource of exiſtence, or as he deſcribes himſelf, the *I A M. Thus ſhalt thou ſay unto the children of Iſrael, I A M hath ſent me unto you.* But when we turn our eyes upon his creatures, what do we behold? but a borrowed and contingent exiſtence which they hold by his grant,

which

which at the moment of their creation, depended upon his will, and which every inſtant is ſubject to it? Thus their preſervation is a continued creation, *for in him we live, and move, and have our being.*

He is *eternal,* and *we are but of yeſterday:* He is *independant,* whereas we, and all that ſurround us, are conſtantly deriving new ſupplies from Him; expoſed to the loſs of what we have, and needing new acquirements. He is *immutable,* always the ſame; in him is no ſucceſſion, no modification, no tranſition from one condition to another. He is all that he can ever be, whereas his creatures are mutable, conſtantly affected by the objects which ſurround them, and perpetually paſſing through a variety of ſituations and circumſtances. He is infinite in his eſſence and attributes as Creator, unconfined by ſpace, or time, and fills immenſity. *The heaven of heavens cannot contain him,* and all his glorious and adorable perfections, are as uncircumſcribed as his eſſence. Whereas his creatures occupy but a ſmall point in

ſpace, and an inconſiderable portion in time; they poſſeſs no quality, but in a degree equally limited with their nature; whatever progreſs they may make towards perfection, by the beſt improvement of their faculties, to whatever height they may elevate themſelves, their knowledge and activity will ever remain confined within narrow bounds; and they will ſtill continue at an infinite diſtance, from Him *who fills heaven and earth, before whom the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeneſs will ye compare unto him?*

Let us proceed to the ſecond idea contained in this definition, *that God is the origin of exiſtence to all inferior beings*; and let us examine what perfections muſt reſide in Him, as *Creator of the univerſe.*

The firſt attribute that ſtrikes our minds, when we reflect on the production of the world,

world, is *power.* St. Paul, ſpeaking of *the inviſible things of God, which are clearly ſeen,* calls our attention *to his eternal power,* which in an infinite Being, muſt of neceſſity be infinite. But ſhould we not be diſpoſed to admit the force of this argument, there is another more ſimple, conſequently more evident; drawn from the very act of creation. To create! to produce from nothing, to give exiſtence, to what was inanimate! demonſtrates without doubt the higheſt extent of power; and is the nobleſt idea we can form of that attribute in our Maker. He who made me, who from nothing cauſed me to paſs into exiſtence, can do in, and for me, every thing that is conſiſtent with the nature and eſſence he has conferred upon me. Therefore he is all-powerful with reſpect to me; this may with equal propriety be ſaid of all the beings that compoſe the univerſe, as they are all creatures of his power. Scripture, when it informs us *that with God all things are poſſible,* has no term more emphatical by which to expreſs his infinite power; and appeals to creation as its inconteſtible

 proof.

proof. *He calleth thoſe things which be not, as though they were. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hoſt of them by the breath of his mouth. For he ſpake and it was done; he commanded and it ſtood faſt. He ſaid let there be light, and there was light.*

Nor can we admit the irreſiſtable and uncontrollable power of the Creator, without acknowledging at the ſame time, that it is not a blind principle, which produces its effect in a manner merely phyſical. The ſmalleſt attention to the beings which compoſe the world, is ſufficient to diſcover indications of *wiſdom* and *deſign*. Beſides, when we behold it peopled with intelligent creatures, diſtinguiſhed by *knowledge* and deſign, muſt it not appear from thence, that he who made them, poſſeſſes theſe qualities in a much more eminent and ſuperior degree. *Underſtand ye brutiſh among the people: He that planted the ear, ſhall he not hear? He that formed the eye, ſhall he not ſee? He that teacheth man knowledge, ſhall he not know?* Whence it follows, that the divine

mind

mind is infinitely *intelligent*, or endowed with underftanding and will. His knowledge extends to all creatures. He fees at one glance all caufes, and every fubfequent effect, capable of refulting from them throughout all eternity. He contemplates by a fingle act that immenfe chain of confequences, that comprife all periods paft, prefent, and future. Let us attend to the language of fcripture on this aftonifhing fubject. *Great is the Lord, his underftanding is infinite. There is no fearching of his underftanding. The Lord fearcheth all hearts, and underftandeth all the imagination of the thoughts. I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from antient times, the things that are not yet done. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Neither is there any creature that is not manifeft in his fight; but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him, with whom we have to do. God is light, and in him is no darknefs.*

From the Omniſcence of God, we are led to infer his *infinite wiſdom,* which conſiſts in *conſtantly propoſing the beſt and moſt excellent end, and employing the moſt proper and efficacious means to obtain it.* Thus His will being ever directed by his ſupreme wiſdom, can never in any poſſible caſe degenerate into *fancy* or *caprice.* All his proceedings are the dictates and counſels of his eternal wiſdom. *The Lord of Hoſts is wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working. The only wiſe God,* becauſe every ſubordinate degree of wiſdom, that created intelligences may poſſeſs, bears no greater proportion to the fountain of knowledge, than a feeble ſpark, to a conflagrated world. Well therefore might the inſpired apoſtle exclaim, when contemplating this amazing ſubject. *O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God!*

Having ſhewn the *infinite power and wiſdom* of the Creator of the univerſe, I come to the conſideration of his boundleſs goodneſs. Nor will it be difficult to eſtabliſh this

interesting proposition from the theory already laid down. For if his *wisdom in designing* is a perfect security from that versatility which arises from ignorance, or caprice; it is evident he can never sport with the happiness of his creatures, and that when He determined to create them, he was actuated by some motive worthy of Himself. Now his own advantage, or that of his creatures must have been the end in view. And is it possible that a *necessarily existant, immutable* and *infinite* Being, who is all-sufficient, consequently totally disinterested in all he does, could propose any benefit to himself? or be influenced by any thing but the godlike satisfaction of opening the sources of bliss, and dispensing to his creatures that felicity, *those rivers of pleasure which flow at his right-hand for evermore?* He knows what perfect happiness is, and the method of conferring it best adapted to the nature of his creatures. Thus the voice of reason loudly proclaims, *That our Creator is our Father, a father whose love is infinite, because his goodness is unalterable.*

Proofs

Proofs of the infinite goodness of God taken from scripture.

SCRIPTURE here opens a rich and abundant field for our contemplation, no subject is treated more repeatedly or emphatically, than that of divine goodness. The supreme Being is there represented as *our father, doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, thou O Lord art our father:* and it is by this tender appellation that our Saviour encourages us to address Him; when he says, *after this manner pray ye, Our father, &c.* He is styled *the father of mercies, The Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.* The strongest and most lively images are employed to represent this disposition of God towards us, *the riches of his goodness and forbearance, the tender mercies of our*

God,

God, and an apoſtle writing to the Epheſians, prays, *that they being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height thereof.*

But as it is not poſſible to ſelect here all the paſſages of ſcripture that relate to this ſubject, I ſhall confine my obſervations to three, which have always appeared to me, expreſſive of peculiar energy. The firſt, is that in Iſaiah, where God by the mouth of his prophet expoſtulates with and comforts his people. *Zion ſaid, the Lord hath forſaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb? yea ſhe may forget, yet will I not forget thee.* The love of a mother for her infant, is the ſtrongeſt and moſt conſtant attachment we can conceive, I might ſay the moſt univerſal. For where is the animal, however weak and timid on other occaſions, that has not courage ſufficient to defend its young? and do we not conſider with averſion and horror as

a monſter, a mother who by any other paſſion has ſtifled this ſentiment of nature? But rare as theſe examples are, we are ſometimes called to behold them. *They may forget, yet will not I.* His love is then ſuperior to the ſtrongeſt examples of it among men, it is conſtant, it is infinite; well then might the pſalmiſt declare with an unſhaken confidence, *when my father and mother forſake me, then the Lord will take me up.*

The ſecond paſſage alluded to, is that in which our Saviour aſcribes goodneſs in the ſuperlative degree to God alone. *And behold one came and ſaid unto him, good maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit eternal life? And he ſaid unto him, why calleſt thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.* Here the only begotton Son of God, the Saviour of the world, *refuſes to be called good;* and expreſly declares that title to belong to God alone. Are we then to conclude from theſe remarkable words, that there is no ſuch thing as goodneſs among men; that parents have no love for their children, and above

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all, that our bleſſed Redeemer was deſtitute of goodneſs, and had no love for us? it cannot be taken by any one in this ſenſe. For had the ſupreme Creator endowed us with a nature averſe to the exerciſe of this celeſtial virtue, would he ever have made it our duty, or have propoſed himſelf as an example for our imitation, commanding us *to be merciful as our father in heaven is merciful?* And does he not condeſcend to borrow alluſions from the tender tie of paternal affection whereby to expreſs his own benevolent diſpoſitions? *Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him:* from whence it equally follows, that the love of parents for their offspring is not void of all goodneſs. But if we admit this, how much more readily muſt we acknowledge, that the Saviour of the world, *He who though he was rich, yet for our ſakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,* was poſſeſſed of goodneſs in an eminent degree? Yet it is the ſame Jeſus, *whoſe love ſurpaſſeth knowledge,* that ſays *why calleſt thou me good, there is none good but one, that is God.*'

God. What then muſt have been his meaning, what the ſenſe of theſe ſublime words? manifeſtly this: that the goodneſs of God being abſolutely infinite, unlimited and unbounded, can never be compared with the ſame quality in his creatures, how excellent ſoever they may be, becauſe *finite* can bear no proportion to *infinite*. It is true that the *goodneſs* and the *wiſdom* of God, may reſide in his creatures in a limited degree, as they are communicable perfections, but to poſſeſs theſe attributes *infinitely*, belongs to God alone, and is the excluſive privilege of a neceſſarily exiſtant Being. He is called *the only wiſe God*, in the ſame ſenſe in which our Saviour declares that he alone is good.

The third quotation I have in view are thoſe words, of the *diſciple whom Jeſus loved*, and whoſe writings breathe ſo much of the ſpirit of his divine maſter, *He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.* Sublime, affecting character! love and goodneſs are then the eſſence of his will, the motives of all his actions, on which we may with ſafety

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repofe the deareft intereft of our fouls! With refpect to his divine intelligence, *God is light, and in him is no darknefs*, no ignorance, no error; and in refpect to his *will*, He is pure and infinite love, without any mixture of malevolence.

If we admit this reprefentation of the character and difpofitions of God towards us, we cannot fuppofe hatred to refide in his nature, becaufe to fay, that love hates, is a contradiction in terms. The author of the book of wifdom, whoever he was, fpeaking of the fupreme Being, defcribes him in a manner too exalted, and at the fame time too juft, to be overlooked. Speaking of *that mercy which he had upon all that they fhould amend*, he fays; *For thou loveft all the things that are, and abhoreft nothing which thou haft made: for never wouldft thou have made any thing if thou hadft hated it.*

Thus, if we have any knowledge of God, of his character and difpofitions towards us, we muft acknowledge that His love is the

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grand ſpring of all he has done, or ever will do for us, if we refuſe to admit this, St. John tells us, that *we have not known* him, for *God is love*, and that this amiable diſpoſition alone, which enables us to ſee him as he is, can entitle us to any reſemblance to him.

Though we have juſt been contemplating ſome of the moſt ſtriking expreſſions of divine benevolence, yet as it is a truth upon which all religion is founded; ſo intereſting in its nature, and ſo repeatedly urged both in the old and new teſtament; I ſhall not fear to incur the diſpleaſure of my reader, by detaining him a few moments longer, on this delightful ſubject.

What I would farther propoſe on this head, is taken from the goſpel diſpenſation which diſcovers the *good will of God to men*, his paternal deſigns; and in a word, their glorious deſtination to perfect and everlaſting felicity; this is clearly expreſſed, by the apoſtle, who ſays, *that the living God, is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of thoſe that be-*

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lieve, and will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Such are the declarations of His will; who is called *the Saviour of all men,* and whoſe *deſigns, purpoſes,* and *reſolutions,* cannot fail; becauſe infinite wiſdom ſees the beſt means to accompliſh them; and infinite power, enables him to employ them; thus it is impoſſible his determinations ſhould be ſubverted. But had we not this argument drawn from his divine perfections, we ſhould ſtill have the poſitive aſſurances of ſcripture, *that the counſel of the Lord endureth forever, my counſel ſhall ſtand and I will do all my pleaſure:* ſays the ſupreme Jehovah by the mouth of his prophet Iſaiah; in a word, it is *Him who worketh all things, after the counſel of his own will.* Such is the *immutability of his counſel,* and *conſtancy,* and *immutability,* form the firſt characters of infinite goodneſs.

The effect of this divine benevolence, the happy conſequence that mortals are to derive from it, is *ſalvation;* perfect and univerſal,

verſal ſalvation; for this is *His will*, when he calls himſelf the *Saviour of all men.* Now ſalvation is that life, that celeſtial happineſs which the author of life, and fountain of felicity has prepared for his creatures, and to which he will raiſe them all. This immortal and unutterable bliſs, ſo worthy of Him to beſtow, and of us to aſpire to, will conſiſt in the perfection of our ſouls, in knowledge and holineſs, and that of our bodies being raiſed incorruptible and glorious; in the magnificent abode and delightful ſociety of angels and *of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, and above all in our communion with the Son of God, our gracious Redeemer: finally, in our admiſſion to the beatific viſion of the ſupreme Being, *who will unite us to himſelf, and make us partakers of his nature, and happineſs*; ſo that *God will be all in all.* And can we form to ourſelves the idea of greater happineſs, are our natures ſuſceptible of more perfect, more exalted felicity, than that of which God Himſelf will be the immediate, and inexhauſtible ſource?

Such is the ſhort, but delightful ſketch, of this ſalvation, which is to be *our inheritance,* the poſſeſſion to which *God by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt has appointed us,* and which, as it is prepared for us by Him, muſt comprehend all deſirable good. Did I ſay, deſirable? it muſt contain *exceeding and abundantly more, than we are able to aſk, or think;* all the felicity of which our natures are ſuſceptible; and which a Being infinitely powerful can confer upon us; in a word all that is poſſible. Which comprehends the ſecond character of infinite goodneſs, viz. a diſpoſition to do all poſſible good.

We come next to conſider *the duration of infinite goodneſs,* which is throughout all eternity. Thus the ſalvation he confers upon us, muſt be an *eternal ſalvation; a life everlaſting, an immortality, an eternal inheritance, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for us. An incorruptible crown;* in a word *thoſe things which are not ſeen, and which are eternal,* whereas *the things which are ſeen are temporal.* If

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then our heavenly Father has reſerved an eternal ſalvation for us, in the treaſures of his munificence, he will forever beſtow upon us, all poſſible good, becauſe *His goodneſs endureth forever:* and thus we are come to the third character in infinite goodneſs.

The fourth and laſt, is, that *it is a diſpoſition eternally to confer all poſſible good on all mankind, without exception.* The paſſages above cited are full of the plaineſt and moſt poſitive declarations of this truth, it is the language of revelation in almoſt every page, *that the Lord is good unto all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works.*

Thus I have proved that the doctrine of ſcripture with reſpect to our future deſtination, evidently demonſtrates, that the goodneſs of God is indeed infinite; as I have diſtinctly ſhewn from the declaration of it, *as His will,* that all men ſhould be ſaved; which neceſſarily implies all the characters of infinite goodneſs, and is perfectly equivalent with this propoſition, *that there is in the*

the ſupreme Being, a conſtant will, to confer all poſſible good upon all mankind, throughout all eternity. And does not this exactly correſpond with the definition of *infinite goodneſs,* which I gave in the preceding chapter?

Such has the Father of our Spirits revealed himſelf to us, in his word: but He has yet another method of inſtruction, more ſenſible, more evident, and more univerſal, than the moſt perfect doctrine could ever be; and this is our *experience:* experience, when joined to that revelation which enlightens our reaſon, places this truth in ſo ſtriking a light, that it becomes as it were palpable, and is an object of our ſenſes.

Thus when revelation proclaims the promiſe of eternal life, in which the treaſures of divine munificence are diſplayed; it alſo appeals to a fact, to the moſt ſignal inſtance of infinite goodneſs, in the gift, the precious gift, that God has beſtowed upon us in his Son, to call and to conduct us to happineſs: that our faith being founded on experience,

 may

may lead us to place an unſhaken confidence in all his aſſurances of ſalvation.

Now as this fact is appealed to in proof of the infinite goodneſs of our Maker, let us examine how it is evidenced by it.

The ſupreme Creator beholding the beings he had made, and deſtined to happineſs, wandering in the ways of ſin, and departing from that celeſtial life, for the enjoyment of which they were created; appointed his *own Son, to be the Saviour of the world.* And could the Eternal Father beſtow on us a more excellent gift, than He, *who is the image of His own inviſible Godhead, the firſt-born of every creature: by whom the world was made, His firſt born, His only begotten, His well beloved ſon, in whom he declares himſelf well pleaſed, who was crowned with glory and happineſs, in the boſom of the father, before the world was?*

But when He appointed this beloved Son to be the deliverer of the human race; to the

the accomplifhing this end, and the fulfilling of this divine commiffion; He gave him *power over all men, power to raife them from the dead, and to judge them;* authority *to reign over them, that he might bring them all to God.*

But previous to the exercife of this mediatorial authority, it was neceffary that he fhould *become the light of the world;* and not alone inftruct us by his precepts, but fhew us in his perfon, what thofe virtues were, which we were enjoined to practice, in order to fit ourfelves to *be partakers of this great falvation.* He was therefore not only appointed to be the teacher, and deliverer; but the *model,* and *guide,* of the human race.

To this end the *Son of God,* became the *fon of man,* emptied himfelf and became like to us, by taking with our mortal nature all its infirmities and miferies; and fubmiting to death, that by his refurrection, and afcenfion to heaven, the glorious certainty of our future deftination might appear.

Now to accomplish this, it was necessary that the Divine Being should give *his well-beloved son* to a sinful world; that he should *not spare him*, but should *deliver him up*. Thus we behold our Saviour, in conformity to the will of his Father, quitting the celestial abode of divine glory, condescending to be born of a virgin, living amongst us in a mean and abject condition, exposed to contradictions, to hatred, and to all the cruel malice of his enemies; becoming a prey to their machinations, abandoned to their barbarous rage, placed in the rank of a criminal, loaded with reproach, and indignity, and condemned to the most bitter sufferings: nailed to an infamous cross, and there expiring in grief and agony. And is it thus, O God of justice! that thou permitest thine innocent, and holy Son to become the victim, of a wicked and corrupt world, a world of sinners, of unjust and cruel rebels! *O the depth of the riches of the goodness and love of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.*

Such

Such is the gift which God has beſtowed upon us in his Son, ſuch the ſtriking and ever memorable act by which He has ſignalized his infinite goodneſs to us; and what goodneſs may we not diſcover, what evidence may we not draw from it? Two reflections certainly merit our attention.

Firſt, Which way ſoever we turn our thoughts on this aſtoniſhing ſubject, we behold the traces of infinite goodneſs; and not the traces only, but the moſt reſplendent and convincing marks of this amiable, this adorable attribute, in the great Author of our being. *His gift*, was that of the moſt excellent, the moſt ſublime intelligence, and therefore the moſt tender object of his affection. *He gave him* in a manner not leſs ſurprizing, *He ſpared him not*, but delivered him up to die upon an ignominious croſs: if we next conſider *on whom he conferred ſo tranſcendent a favor*, it was on a whole race of men, *alienated from Him, and enemies in their minds by wicked works.* Or if we turn *to the purpoſes for which He gave him*, we

 ſhall

ſhall diſcover, that he was deſigned to exhibit, even in his death, the moſt perfect model of all virtue, and that the conſequences of that death, were to be our glorious deſtination to a happy, and eternal life. Need we then doubt that our ſalvation is *his will*, and our happineſs his delight; when he employs ſuch means to ſecure it? and after this wonderful token of His love, with what confidence may we not depend, that we ſhall forever remain the happy objects of His infinite compaſſion, and love; and that He will deny us nothing that can contribute to our everlaſting well being? Such is the concluſion which St. Paul derives from this marvellous diſpenſation: *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him, alſo freely give us all things?*

Thus does experience diſcover to us the infinite love of our Maker; and how evident ſoever truths founded on reaſon may appear, the inſtruction we receive from experience, brings home to our hearts ſuch ſtrong and lively

lively impreſſions, that we are unable to reſiſt the conviction.

The moſt poſitive declarations, the moſt immediate promiſes, from the mouth of God Himſelf, *that he will neither leave nor forſake us*, may put tranquillity into our minds, becauſe they are the declarations of Him, *who is not a man that he ſhould lie, nor the ſon of man that he ſhould repent;* yet even theſe, were we deſtitute of all experience of their truth, could never create in our hearts, the intimate conviction, the perfect aſſurance which only *that* can give.

For could I ever from theſe declarations, and promiſes, have inferred, the ineſtimable gift of ſuch a Saviour? I might indeed have hoped, from the principles already eſtabliſhed, that my Almighty Father would refuſe me nothing which he ſaw neceſſary to my happineſs; but who could preſume to expect *ſuch things, as eye has not ſeen, nor ear heared*, ſurely *they could never enter into the heart of man to conceive?*

But

But when to the expreſs aſſurances, to the moſt magnificent promiſes of divine goodneſs, we are able to add that evident demonſtration which ariſes from the experience of the infinite goodneſs of God in the gift of his Son, what ſtrength does it not convey to them? a flood of light pours in upon the mind; the whole man lays hold on the delightful truth, by every faculty of his ſoul; he not only knows, comprehends, and believes it; but he ſees, contemplates, taſtes, and in a word feels, in the inmoſt receſſes of his heart; that his Eternal Creator, is a father infinitely kind.

It is thus *we may be filled with all the fulneſs of God.* It was this conſideration which led St. Paul to expreſs himſelf with ſuch heart felt eloquence, and ſuch ſtrength and energy of language. *I am perſuaded,* ſays he, *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.*

CHAP. III.

Conſequences deduced from the infinite goodneſs of God.

AFTER having in the two preceding chapters explained and proved, the *infinite goodneſs of God,* it ſhould ſeem that this foundation of the ſyſtem of His government of moral agents was ſufficiently known, and that I might here terminate the firſt part of this work. But this ſublime and delightful propoſition, is a truth too intereſting to content myſelf with having demonſtrated it; we muſt ſtop and contemplate the moſt affecting object that can ever engage our attention: the Being who made us, and who is goodneſs itſelf; *The eternal will,* who is love, and breathes nothing but love! If the pſalmiſt ſaid it was a good thing, O moſt High!

High! to ſhew forth thy loving kindneſs every morning; how much reaſon have we to ſay it is a good thing to contemplate, to meditate, to reflect upon this ineffable goodneſs? our minds no ſooner employ themſelves thus, but our hearts are touched, and penetrated, and we are ready to exclaim, O God of love! *in thy preſence is fulneſs of joy!*

But it is not only the beauty of the ſubject that detains me: I have another and more important reaſon, which makes it neceſſary that I ſhould dwell upon it; and this is, *that the infinite goodneſs of God* is not known, or what amounts to the ſame, that *it is ill known.* I ſay that *to know improperly*, or *not to know*, amounts to the ſame thing. St. John does not ſay, *he that loveth not, has improperly known God*, but, he that loveth not, *has not known Him.*

And here I perceive that many of my readers will be alarmed at the apparent injuſtice of the accuſation, and aſk how this complaint can be made among Chriſtians,

when

when there is not a fect, a fingle communion amongft them, which does not profefs to believe the infinite goodnefs of God? Is there a divine, of what denomination foever, who does not acknowledge and exprefly teach this truth? is there even an individual in Chriftendom who does not profefs it: info-much that the epithet of a *good God*, is in the mouth of every one? To all this I agree; mankind acknowledge and profefs to believe the infinite goodnefs of God, it is preached, it is taught, and notwithftanding all this, it is not known.

But it is neceffary here to explain what I advance, not only to make the propriety of this chapter appear, but of the whole of this treatife. For why write to explain and eftablifh a truth already known to all, and which no one contefts?

I fay then firft, that the goodnefs of God, is not known to all fuch, as attribute to Him, a will, and actions, abfolutely incom-

patible therewith, and which can only be-long to infinite malevolence and cruelty.

Secondly, it is not known to thoſe, who have doubts, difficulties, and objections concerning it.

Thirdly, it is not known to all ſuch, as have not for the Supreme Being, for his providence and for his laws, the ſentiments which infinite goodneſs deſerves; for his providence and his laws, are no other than his perfect and gracious will.

And when tried by theſe rules, how many will be found who know thee not, O merful God! how many labour under the dreadful misfortune of miſconceiving thine adorable goodneſs, through the means of prejudice, ignorance, or paſſion! Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon them!

Since ſuch is the caſe, it was neceſſary to determine the preciſe idea, and to demonſtrate the perfect certainty of this truth, as I have

have done hitherto; but this is not enough; I therefore devote this chapter to the enumeration of the principal confequences which flow from the infinite goodnefs of God; which will in the firft place, entirely refine it from the drofs of error, which has corrupted, and even totally deftroyed, our ideas of it.

Secondly, reconcile it with every appearance, with every event in the courfe of nature, with every difpenfation of providence, which may feem in contradiction to it.

Thirdly fhew, what are the fentiments which the knowledge of the infinite goodnefs of God infallibly produces in the heart, when the mind is rightly informed, and thoroughly convinced of it.

This chapter will be divided into two fections; the firft of which will contain the confequences refpecting the theory; and the fecond, the practical confequences to be derived from it.

SECT.

SECT. I.

THE firſt conſequence reſulting from *the infinite goodneſs of God*, is *its incomprehenſibility*, or in other words, the utter impoſſibility of any finite creature ever comprehending the extent of this attribute, as poſſeſſed by the Supreme Being.

And this muſt appear with the cleareſt evidence; for as this perfection is conſtantly employed in doing all the good, that is poſſible, we muſt in order to comprehend it, know all the good which every creature, is, and will ever be, capable of receiving; we muſt be ignorant of none of the works of our Maker, muſt know the whole univerſe as He does, muſt know God Himſelf; and this is to advance, that our knowledge muſt be infinite. Thus it is evident that the infinite goodneſs of God, is incomprehenſible

ble by us; becauſe we can never poſſeſs infinite knowledge.

Beſides, we ſee that this attribute is connected with his wiſdom, and power: thus when we ſay that his goodneſs is incomprehenſible, it is equal to ſaying that all the attributes of our Creator are infinite, and that He Himſelf far exceeds the limits of our underſtanding. *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou know?*

But here ſome will ſay, if the goodneſs of God is incomprenſible to us, becauſe it is infinite, have we not juſt reaſon to fear that all reſearches into it, will be vain, and all our arguments, uncertain conjectures? ſhall the limited powers of man, his weak and ſhort-ſighted reaſon, preſume to advance any thing on a ſubject ſo dark, and impenetrable; and muſt not all the arguments of his feeble reaſon be uncertain and raſh, if

not abſolutely falſe? How then are we to argue on an incomprehenſible ſubject?

Such are the declamations I have often heard, and ſometimes even read. For when men will not admit the conſequences that follow from the infinite goodneſs of their Maker, they think to avoid them by taking refuge in its unſearchable nature; and declaim on the darkneſs, the weakneſs, and temerity of human reaſon.

Let us for a moment examine what that faculty is, which we hear ſo often cenſured. It is true that it is originally covered with profound darkneſs; but it is alſo true, that it is the mean by which we may acquire light, and *that*, in an endleſs progreſſion. It is true that in its firſt dawn it is weak and feeble; but it is not leſs ſo, that it acquires ſtrength by exerciſe, and that the more it is exerted, the more vigorous it becomes. This reaſon, however obſcure and feeble in its origin, is nevertheleſs the grand mark of diſtinction between us, and the brute creation;

tion; it is the faculty by which we are rendered capable of contemplating and resembling in any degree, the infinitely perfect God; in a word, therein can only consist His image stamped upon man. Reason is the excellence, the perfection, the dignity of human nature; and God addresses himself to it, in nature, and in revelation. He, who made us for happiness, determined to raise us from the dreadful wretchedness of ignorance, and sin, to perfection and felicity; and to accomplish this end he gives us the means, of developing, of exercising, of fortifying, and of enlightening it by the knowledge of the truth. Ah! let us then venerate our reason. Let us beware of vilifying and degrading this *candle of the Lord* in which consists the honor, and glory, of our nature. Let us fear to follow our prejudices and passion, since it is they that render us culpable and wretched; and let us remember that we shall never be perfect and happy, till our reason shall have acquired an absolute, and habitual empire, over our senti-

ments and conduct; that is, till we are truly rational.

I solicit my readers to pardon this digression in favor of human reason, which I considered necessary, since, under the pretext that the goodness of God is incomprehensible, the ignorance and weakness of reason have been exagerated to such a degree, that some might be tempted to infer, that it was a treacherous and dangerous guide. It was therefore requisite to explain, how far it might be deemed weak and imperfect, without prejudice to the excellence and dignity of this valuable faculty.

Let us now take up the question, How we are to reason on an incomprehensible subject? Now when we say that the Divine Goodness is unsearchable, we do not mean that the subject is so dark, and impenetrable, that we can form no ideas of it; that we cannot comprehend what goodness is; and that we do not perceive with the clearest evidence, that the Supreme Being is infinitely good.

good. This would be a very falſe and abſurd concluſion, and what the two preceding chapters are intended to overthrow; we mean therefore to expreſs, that in the extent of Divine goodneſs, there is, and will ever remain, infinitely more than we can comprehend; and thus, that the ſublimeſt ideas we can form, will continue at an infinite diſtance from the reality of that attribute in our Maker. We mean alſo to ſignify, that we can never aſcribe more goodneſs to God, than he poſſeſſes, or exceed its bounds in our expectations of happineſs from it. We cannot indeed determine the time, and manner, in which Infinite Wiſdom may ſee fit to diſpenſe his bleſſings; becauſe our knowledge is finite: but we may with certainty affirm with the apoſtle, *that he is able to do exceedingly and abundantly more for us, than we can aſk or think.*

Laſtly, when we ſay that the infinite goodneſs of God is incomprehenſible, we mean that it is *inexhauſtible* with reſpect to us, and that our progreſs in the knowledge of it will

laſt forever; for in the riches of His love conſiſt thoſe *rivers of pleaſure, of which he will cauſe us to drink.* This is the true and intereſting ſignification of the term, and firſt conſequence *that the infinite goodneſs of God is incomprehenſible.*

The ſecond, contains *the abſolute impoſſibility of there being any thing in the ſupreme mind contrary to his infinite goodneſs.* This truth is ſo apparent, that many of my readers may call it a ſelf evident propoſition; as if I were to ſay, *that it is impoſſible for a thing to be, and not to be at the ſame time.* And yet evident as it certainly is, its diſcuſſion is both important and neceſſary, and will take up a conſiderable portion of this chapter. For,

Though mankind admit the infinite goodneſs of God, they nevertheleſs obſtinately perſiſt in attributing to Him deſigns and actions, abſolutely incompatible with its very nature; and which can only belong to infinite cruelty. To give colour to this, it was

neceſſary to ſeek in God certain qualities, and attributes, which might ſerve as a foundation for ſuch a will, and for ſuch actions. Thus they have laid hold on His *incomprehenſibility*, which they apply to his goodneſs in ſuch a manner, as forbids any concluſions to be drawn without temerity. But I have already combated this ſophiſtical reaſoning. They have alſo oppoſed to the goodneſs of God, *His liberty*, by which he is free to do or not to do good; that is free to be, or not to be good. They have found *His holineſs*, by which he holds the wicked in ſuch abomination, that inſtead of being the objects of his goodneſs and love, they are the unhappy victims of His diſpleaſure and hatred. They have diſcovered *the juſtice of God*, that *punitive* juſtice as they call it, which has ſuch a decided ſuperiority over his goodneſs, though both are infinite, that it obliges him to inflict on the wicked a puniſhment infinite in duration. They have defined the *authority of God* to be, an abſolute right in Him to diſpoſe of his creatures at his pleaſure, without any regard to their happineſs, and

confequently without confulting his goodnefs. *His Majefty* alfo, by which they have determined the minuteft fin to deferve infinite punifhment; becaufe committed againft infinite majefty. They have found *His glory*, to be the fupreme end for which all things were created, and which He will difplay in the infinite mifery of the reprobate, in direct oppofition to His infinite goodnefs.

Confider how many things have been found in God, which are contrary to his goodnefs, fince they prevent its exertion! how many formidable barriers are raifed to ftop the current of divine benignity in its eternal courfe! May we not with reafon apprehend left the fentiments arifing from its influence upon our hearts fhould entirely efcape us? But thofe who have perufed the preceding chapter, have already feen, on what firm foundations divine benevolence ftands. I proceed therefore to fhew, with all imaginable evidence, *that it is abfolutely impoffible that there fhould exift any thing in God, contrary to his infinite goodnefs.*

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How then! may it be ſaid, will you, in order to vindicate the goodneſs of God, aſſert, that He is neither *free*, nor *holy*, nor *juſt*, that he poſſeſſes neither *authority*, nor *majeſty*, nor *glory?*

On the contrary, I ſhall prove that theſe are ſo many divine attributes, which He poſſeſſes in an infinitely perfect meaſure, becauſe He is infinitely good: and thus, that His other perfections, inſtead of oppoſing, agree and conſpire eternally to ſhed happineſs and perfection throughout the univerſe.

But before I examine theſe perfections ſeparately, it will be proper juſt to caſt an eye back upon our ſecond conſequence, which aſſerts, *the impoſſibility of there being in God any thing in contradiction to his infinite goodneſs*, and to diſcover why this is impoſſible?

Becauſe it is impoſſible, that the ſame Being can be infinitely good, and infinitely evil. For as all the attributes of the Deity are

are infinite, that which is oppoſed to good, being evil, muſt be infinite evil; and this ſurely is as impoſſible, as it is horrid and blaſphemous.

Now the grand uſe, the conſequence of this important truth, is the aſſurance it gives me, that, whatever aſpect preſent appearances may wear, nothing can exiſt in God contrary to his goodneſs. Subtle and abſtract metaphyſical queſtions, on the liberty, the holineſs, the juſtice, the authority, the majeſty, and glory of God, may embarraſs me for a while; but they will never ſhake this capital, this fundamental truth; and I ſhall anſwer them as the blind man did the Phariſees concerning Jeſus, when they ſaid, *give God the praiſe; we know that this man is a ſinner. He anſwered and ſaid, whether he be a ſinner or not, I know not, one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I ſee.*

But let us ſee what theſe perfections are that are ſuppoſed to differ from goodneſs. As creator, and governor of the world, the

Deity

Deity can exert but three perfections, knowledge, goodnefs, and power; by His infinite wifdom he can always diftinguifh what is beft to be done: His infinite goodnefs will ever lead him to prefer the greateft good; and His power will enable him to execute his will: from whence it follows, that the reft of his perfections, though they bear different names, can be only branches of fome one of thefe, or the refult of their diverfe combinations; and that in either of thefe cafes there can be nothing in God averfe to his infinite goodnefs.

And firft let us confider *Divine liberty*, which is a negative perfection, confifting *in a perfect exemption from all conftraint, whether external, or internal.* In confequence of this liberty, God may be faid to do *whatfoever he wills*, and He wills whatever is beft: thus being exempt from all conftraint from internal or external caufes, He is independant, and His actions are the refult of His choice: many are the declarations of fcripture expreffive of this divine liberty.

berty. *Whatſoever the Lord pleaſed, that did He in heaven and in earth. My counſel ſhall ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure, ſaith the Lord. He executeth all things after the counſel of his own will, for who hath reſiſted His will?*

But ſecondly, if ſuch is the perfect liberty of God, how can it ever ſtand oppoſed to his goodneſs? alas! only by ſuppoſing it, what it is not, nor ever can be. For under pretence of exalting the liberty of God, He is ſuppoſed free to determine for, or againſt, in the affirmative, or the negative; independent of the motives which his infinite wiſdom may preſent; and free to will, or not to will, or even—ſhall I venture to complete this horrid propoſition? or even to *will* with equal indifference good or evil. And is this then the infinite liberty of our Creator? would it in your eſtimation be an amiable, and glorious perfection, equally to *will* the happineſs or miſery of His creatures; indiſcriminately to love, or hate them; and to decide indifferently for good

or

or evil? and is it poſſible that prejudice can ſo far blind many whoſe minds are in other reſpects intelligent, and upright? But alas! ſuch is its baneful influence! The neceſſity of defending a doctrine which they venerate, however horrid, becauſe they believe it revealed in the word of God; this neceſſity leads men to hold a language the ſenſe of which is revolting; contrary to the natural dictates of their heart; and which they have in a thouſand inſtances contradicted, when they only meant to expreſs the ſimple and natural ideas, of the adorable goodneſs of the Lord.

But let us turn from this dreadful phantom, raiſed by ignorance and prejudice, and conſider the liberty of the Divine will, as the determinations of deſign, and choice, from motives worthy of Him; and which His infinite wiſdom can never be at a loſs to ſuggeſt. Thence His infinite goodneſs muſt remain unalterably, and immutably the ſame throughout endleſs ages. His eſſence is goodneſs

goodneſs and love, He cannot act contrary to his nature, *or deny Himſelf.*

Let us reject with horror all ſuch erroneous opinions of Divine liberty, as deſtroy every idea of His goodneſs; and let us reſolve it, into that abſolute prerogative, which God alone can poſſeſs, of executing every purpoſe of His will without conſtraint from external, or internal cauſes. This is perfect, and infinite liberty; a liberty, which far from oppoſing goodneſs, will enſure its eternal exerciſe.

The holineſs of God, far from being averſe to his goodneſs, is itſelf a capital branch reſulting from it.

The word *holineſs* is made uſe of in ſcripture, to expreſs *the moral perfection* of an intelligent nature: and all will allow that excellence to conſiſt in the *perfection of the will.* Thus is the Supreme Being called *thrice holy*, becauſe His will is ſovereignly *good and perfect.* Now this perfect holineſs of

of God, evidently refults from His perfect goodnefs already eftablifhed. I fhall not therefore go over thefe proofs again, but conclude that if holinefs confifts in the perfection of the will, the Supreme Being muft be moft holy, becaufe He is infinitely good.

Such is the holinefs of God with refpect to himfelf: view it in relation to His creatures; it confifts *in a difpofition invariably to will their moral perfection*, or in other words, to defire *the greateft perfections of our wills*. In conformity to this, He commands *us to love Him with all our hearts*, who is fupremely perfect; and to love our neighbour as ourfelves; to the end that our wills may partake of that perfection, which refides invariably in His. This is the fummary of all the divine laws, which He requires us to obey, becaufe He wills our utmoft perfection. Agreeable to this He declares, *that His will is our fanctification.* He commands us *to tend towards perfection, to be pure, as He is pure; holy, as He is Holy; perfect, as he is perfect; merciful, as He is merciful;*

ciful; in a word, to be imitators of Him as dear children.

From this disposition in the Deity, to advance the *moral perfection* of His creatures, must result His hatred to *moral evil;* sin, is that will in us, *which is in opposition to the law,* and contrary to the love of God, and our neighbour: it is the imperfection, the depravity, the wickedness of our wills. As surely then as God by His holiness desires the perfection of our wills, so surely must He condemn, and detest in us the impurity of vice; *He hates it, with a perfect hatred,* He has it in abomination, He is its implacable enemy, and He will pursue and combat it, as long as we are infected by it. He declares *that nothing unclean shall enter into His holy city; that without holiness no one shall see the Lord; that He is of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity; and that there is no peace to the wicked.*

Such is the nature of Divine holiness as it relates to us. The psalmist had the same idea,

idea, when he ſaid, *thou Lord loveſt righteouſneſs, and hateſt iniquity.* Thence the frequent exhortations in ſcripture *to hate and fly from evil, to love and to do good.* Thus far all mankind are agreed, and no one will deny this to be a juſt idea of the holineſs of the Deity.

But here begins the diſtinction. Thoſe who oppoſe holineſs to goodneſs, by their definition make it ſo formidable an obſtacle, that, infinite as that goodneſs is, it becomes checked and conquered. For under pretext that the holineſs of God conſiſts in an infinite hatred of ſin, they draw this horrid concluſion, that He hates the obſtinate and wicked offender, with an infinite and implacable hatred; ſuch a hatred as will by its effects, conſign them over to infinite and eternal miſery.

How injurious to the holineſs of the Almighty Being is an idea, ſo contrary to goodneſs, which converts holineſs into cruelty. But if the object is painful, it is happy to

reflect with what eafe it may be removed, to give place to that more juft and comforting idea, *that the infinite and implacable hatred of God to fin,* proceeds from *His infinite love of the finner;* thus, He is *infinitely holy, becaufe infinitely good;* and thus is His holinefs a branch of His divine and infinite goodnefs.

The opinion I am about to combat, *that God hates the wicked,* is as univerfal, as it is pernicious, and revolting. We are naturally inclined to the belief in which we are educated, and one of the firft ideas the infant mind receives is that of the eternal fufferings which divine vengeance will inflict on the wicked. When our underftandings, though naturally juft and confiftent, have once admitted this propofition as an indifputable truth, it is natural that we fhould fee in the fupreme Being an infinite hatred to the finner, becaufe it is a hatred forever implacable. We next proceed to fearch for the reafon on which this implacable hatred is founded, and conclude it muft arife from the

the infinite holineſs of our maker. And no ſooner do we admit this ſtrange propoſition than it leads us imperceptibly to aſſociate the moſt oppoſite and moſt incompatible ideas, and thus we reaſon: It is true that God is infinitely good, but it is not leſs true, that He is infinitely holy, and thence ariſes that hatred and deteſtation of ſinners which will end in His inflicting eternal torments upon them. Thus does the introduction of one error corrupt and pervert the moſt ſublime truths, and place the adorable perfections of the Deity in oppoſition with each other, by aſſerting that a Being ſupremely good, will nevertheleſs deal with His offending creatures, as if he were infinitely cruel. Behold the deplorable effects of prejudice! but above all ſee whither it leads: *how deep calleth unto deep*, and how one error draws after it a multitude of others. Our reaſon no ſooner deviates from the right way, by the admiſſion of a falſe principle, then every ſtep it takes leads farther *from the knowledge of the truth.*

But farther. Thofe who make the holinefs of God to confift in His hatred of the finner, have another method of eftablifhing their theory. They produce from fcripture many paffages in proof of it; thus the pfalmift fays, *Thou hateft all the workers of iniquity, the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man;* and Jehovah fpeaking by the mouth of Mofes declares, if the Ifraelites are difobedient *His foul would abhor them.* And again by the prophet Jeremiah, *My heritage crieth out againft me, therefore have I hated it.*

As thefe quotations are taken from fcripture, they will afford us a very ufeful and interefting difcuffion, on what *the divine oracles relate,* refpecting the *fentiments of God towards finners:* and this will greatly contribute to confirm what I have already advanced on the fubject of infinite holinefs, and farther ferve as an illuftrious example of that great truth contained in my preliminary difcourfe, *that God in his word addreffes Himfelf to our reafon.*

Since

Since ſcripture declares, *that God hates the wicked,* there muſt be a ſenſe in which it can be aſſerted with truth, but that ſenſe muſt alſo perfectly agree with His infinite love for them, or the Divine word would be in contradiction with itſelf, and with reaſon, and thereby loſe the evidence of its authenticity, as the word of God. I ſhall therefore proceed to ſhew with all imaginable evidence, and to prove from ſcripture, *that there is one ſenſe in which He may be ſaid to hate ſinners, though there is another in which it is true that He loves them infinitely,* or even, that it is true in one ſenſe, that God has an infinite hatred to the wicked, becauſe in another ſenſe He loves them infinitely.

In ſcripture, as well as in the uſe of familiar language, the terms *love* and *hate,* have two different meanings annexed to them; by one of theſe meanings, which muſt always relate to objects and never to things, to love, or to hate any one, ſignifies *ſincerely to deſire or to will their happineſs, or miſery.* In this ſenſe it is not neceſſary in

order to our being beloved, that we ſhould be in a ſtate of actual perfection; but alone, that we ſhould be capable of a progreſs towards it; for then our natures are at leaſt amiable. In this ſenſe it is that the Supreme Being loves the whole race of men without any exception, or difference. He deſires eternally and invariably their greateſt good, and in this ſenſe *hateth nothing that He hath made*, becauſe he can never will, the final and eternal miſery of any creature. But if the reader is not convinced of this, let him turn to the preceding chapter, where I have demonſtrated the infinity of Divine goodneſs.

But the terms *love*, and *hate*, have yet another ſenſe applied to them, which relates indifferently to perſons and things, and in this ſenſe to love any one, is to take pleaſure in him as in an object that is amiable and agreeable, in whoſe ſociety and intercourſe we take delight. To hate alſo in this ſenſe, is to be diſpleaſed with the object, to regard it as odious, and to feel in its ſociety nothing

but

but averſion and diſguſt. In this ſenſe alſo it may juſtly be ſaid of the Supreme Being, that he loves the righteous, and hates the wicked. He beholds in the upright, that attachment to virtue, that ſincere and univerſal conformity of their wills to His, which is ſo pleaſing in His ſight; and in conſequence of this virtue, this ſincerity, this ſubmiſſion, He loves them with complacence and delight. On the contrary He beholds in their vicious courſes, their conſtant, and obſtinate oppoſition to His will, their propenſity to moral diſorder, and that reſiſtance to His government which is ſo odious in his ſight, and hates them with a hatred of condemnation and averſion. Thus He delights in conferring the tokens of His favour and approbation on the one; while the other will experience the effects of His diſpleaſure in His rigour, and ſeverity. *For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry; but the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

After the expoſition here given of the two different ſenſes applied to the terms *love* and *hate*, it will appear very poſſible, that the ſame individual may be an object of love in the firſt ſenſe, and of hatred in the ſecond. As a wiſe and good parent laments over the irregularities of a diſobedient ſon, yet loves him tenderly, inaſmuch as he ardently deſires his happineſs; but the more tenderly he loves him in this ſenſe, the more will he hate and deteſt the odious ſtate in which his diſorder and vice has placed him. Thus it is with our heavenly Father. He loves the tranſgreſſor, inaſmuch as He ſincerely deſires his greateſt happineſs; but He hates him in that horrid ſtate where his ſins have placed him.

As the ſecond meaning of the term *hate* is equally applicable to perſons or things; the hatred of God for ſinners is exactly ſimilar to his hatred of ſin, and thus the author of the book of wiſdom declares, *that the ungodly and his ungodlineſs, are both alike hateful unto God;* for the expreſſion *hate* being here

here equally applied to the ſinner and the ſin, cannot be underſtood in the firſt ſenſe, which can only relate to perſons, and never to things. Beſides, could the ſame author if he had meant by hatred, the deſire of miſery to the object, have declared in thoſe beautiful words already quoted, and which I repeat with ſo much pleaſure, *that the Lord loveth all the things that are, and abhorreth nothing which He hath made, for never would He have made any thing, if He had hated it.*

It is therefore in the ſecond ſenſe, that the word *hate* is to be underſtood, in the three paſſages above cited. But to make it appear yet more evident, let us examine more cloſely the declaration of the pſalmiſt, where we ſhall ſee this ſecond ſenſe clearly pointed out, by the verſe preceding that, in which the hatred of God for the wicked is expreſſed. *For thou art not a God, that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with Thee: the fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in thy ſight; thou hateſt all the workers of iniquity.*

Thou

Thou ſhalt deſtroy them that ſpeak lies: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

With reſpect to one of thoſe paſſages, where the hatred of God is declared againſt the rebellious Iſraelites, I requeſt my reader to peruſe the twenty-ſixth chapter of Leviticus whence it is taken, from the fourteenth verſe to the end; as it is ſingularly expreſſive *of the ways of God towards ſinners,* and in it will be found thoſe two ſublime, and eternal truths, expreſſed in the moſt lively and ſtriking manner: the firſt, that God is the implacable enemy of ſin, and that He purſues and combats it to the utmoſt in the ſinner; which is declared moſt forcibly from the fourteenth to the thirty-eighth verſe. The ſecond, not leſs evident in the ſeven following verſes is, that when the ſeverities of the Almighty have produced their effect, by conquering the obſtinacy, and reſiſtance of the wicked; when ſinners repent, and confeſs their iniquity, *that their hearts are humbled, and that they accept of the puniſhment of their iniquity; then the Lord remembers*

bers them, will not caſt them away, neither abhors them to deſtroy them utterly, and to break his covenant with them, but will for their ſakes remember the covenant of their anceſtors; that is, receive them into favor, *and return to bleſs them.* The hatred therefore of God for the ſinner is ſuch as corrects and brings them back to Himſelf, ſometimes *and if need be* by the moſt terrible, but at the ſame time the moſt ſalutary chaſtiſements.

It is no ſmall thing no doubt to have proved, that what ſcripture ſays of the hatred of God for ſinners, relates only to the diſpleaſure which their ſtate of rebellion excites: but I will go farther, and prove from ſcripture alſo, that the Supreme Father of mankind wills the eternal happineſs of the wicked, and thus, in the firſt ſenſe, applied to the term *love*, loves them infinitely.

Let us firſt conſider thoſe merciful declarations which relate to the ſalvation of all men, conſequently of that of the ſinner. If God wills that all men ſhould be ſaved, it manifeſtly

manifestly includes the sinner; and is not this to love them infinitely? and St. Peter assures us that *He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* But above all let us attend to the voice of God Himself, who declares with a solemn oath, *As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live.* How sublime and affecting, how infinitely precious and valuable are these truly divine words, of the Father of Mercies! In them I find every thing that is necessary for me to know respecting my Maker, and myself; I behold in them the perfect resemblance of the living God, and read the anticipated history of a sinful world. It is the Creator, the Eternal Father of men, He *who created their souls,* who makes the declaration, and ratifies it with His oath, *As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, &c.* He desires not their death, but wills their life and happiness! and what stronger language could He have employed to assure us, that He did

not

nôt hate, but that He loved the ſinner? He declares it with the ſolemnity of an oath, *and becauſe He could ſware by no greater He ſwares by Himſelf.*

But let us alſo remark the way in which He deſires the life of the wicked; it is by their converſion, they muſt turn to Him and live. He wills their happineſs, but as that is impoſſible while they remain ſinners, He will have them ceaſe to be ſuch, and become penitent, and obedient children. Evident proof this, that the love of God to the ſinner is equal to his hatred of ſin, and that *His deteſtation of ſin, ariſes from His love to the ſinner.* Or in other words that *He is holy, becauſe He is good.*

But ſtrong as theſe promiſes are, the Being *who is love,* foreſeeing how incapable finite goodneſs would be of comprehending that which is infinite *and paſſes knowledge,* has given to our *experience* the moſt ſenſible manifeſtation of His love, the moſt tranſcendent diſplay of his mercy, in the gift of his

his only, and well beloved Son. Certainly if mankind had continued juſt, and holy, this work of redemption had not been neceſſary: it is therefore in favor of ſinners, and of ſinners alone, that this effort of love, this miracle of mercy was wrought, as our Saviour expreſly declares; *they that are whole need not a phyſician but they that are ſick; I came not to call the righteous but the ſinners to repentance. I came to ſeek, and to ſave that which was loſt.* And St. Paul confirms this in a very remarkable manner, as if combating the error I am ſeeking to deſtroy, viz. *that the hatred of God for ſinners conſiſts in His willing their infinite miſery: It is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners.*

How great then muſt be the love of God to poor, wretched, offending creatures! how ſincerely muſt he deſire to ſave them from the dreadful miſery of ſin, and to raiſe them to perfection and happineſs, ſince to accompliſh it, He ſent His own Son, and

expoſed

expofed him to an infamous and cruel death! How can it be poffible that after fuch fignal experience of His infinite compaffion for finners, any fhould be found amongft thofe *who are called by the name of Chrift*, and who glory in his death as the badge of their religious profeffion, that among fuch neverthelefs fhould be found, thofe who maintain the infinite, and implacable hatred of God to the finner, and in confequence of it, their final and irrevocable mifery? how difficult is it, O my God, for thine adorable goodnefs to penetrate into hearts covered with thick darknefs of prejudice and error!

But if the gift of the Son of God, is an everlafting monument of His love for finners; it is not lefs a mark of His infinite, and eternal hatred of fin. How clearly is this exemplified in the work of redemption! how odious, how infupportable in His fight muft that fin appear which He cannot behold in us, but which as long as we continue in it, muft drive us from his prefence, and exclude us from all communion with Him;

when

when to deliver us from it, to cleanſe, and purify us, He has employed a method ſo extraordinary, and made ſo aſtoniſhing a ſacrifice?

Let us then conclude from ſcripture, as we have already done from reaſon, *that the ſupreme Being has an infinite hatred to ſin, founded on His infinite love of the ſinner; or that He is infinitely good, and that His holineſs far from being in contradiction to his goodneſs, is a capital and eſſential branch of it.*

I come next to conſider *the infinite juſtice of God, which far from oppoſing is alſo a branch, an awful, but nevertheleſs an important branch, of infinite goodneſs.*

The general definition of Divine juſtice, *that it is goodneſs, directed by wiſdom,* however true upon the whole, ſeems to have, in quality of a definition, the defect of being too general, and not determining with preciſion, in what the particular character of divine

divine juſtice conſiſts; or the reaſons why the goodneſs of God is ſometimes called juſtice; every act of divine juſtice is an act of His goodneſs directed by his wiſdom; yet every act of goodneſs thus directed cannot be called an act of juſtice. As for example, the gift that God made of His Son to a ſinful world, cannot with propriety be called an act of juſtice, though it is the higheſt inſtance of goodneſs and wiſdom.

I therefore declare in favor of another received definition of Divine juſtice, becauſe it expreſſes with greater preciſion the ideas uſually attached to the term. *That the infinite juſtice of God, conſiſts in His conſtant and immutable will, to diſpenſe to every one, that, which beſt correſponds with his moral ſtate.* The juſtice of one man towards another *is the conſtant and habitual will, of rendering to every one that which is his due;* but as this term is wholly improper when ſpeaking of an Independent Being, we ſubſtitute another, and as a man is called *juſt* who gives to every one his due, ſo is the Divine *Be-*

ing called *juſt*, becauſe He diſpenſes invariably to every one, that, which beſt, agrees with his moral ſtate; and it is eaſy to comprehend that ſuch juſtice, is founded on the infinite wiſdom, and goodneſs, of our Maker.

According to this definition, infinite juſtice adapts with the moſt perfect and minute detail, the reſpective ſuitableneſs of his dealing to our moral ſtate, and conſequently to our wants, throughout the whole of our exiſtence.

But in order to our forming any idea of this diverſity; the conſtant, and exact exertion of which, forms the eſſence of Divine juſtice, we muſt conſider here, the moral ſtate of men and the different ſtate of their wills; which require a diverſity of diſpenſations, on the part of God.

If mankind conſtantly adhered to the laws of virtue, and holineſs, and thus continued in a ſtate of moral rectitude; this diverſity of diſpenſations would not take place, and there

there would be no room for the exercife of what is properly called juftice. All the dealings of God with refpect to man, would then be the difpenfations of pure and infinite goodnefs, without the interference of a fingle chaftifement, and fuch will be the happy œconomy under which *the juft made perfect* fhall live forever, in the manfions of celeftial glory, *when all tears fhall be wiped away from their eyes, and there fhall be no more death, neither forrow, nor crying, neither fhall there be any more pain.* Then, will almighty goodnefs never more appear arrayed in the terrors of juftice; but the fmiles of benignity, the manifeftations of favor, and bleffing, will be continually difplayed; and nothing ever reach our fouls, but the moft grateful and delightful fenfations; for every difpenfation will be the meffenger of happinefs.

But how remote are we in our prefent ftate from this moral perfection; no fooner do our underftandings admit the firft rays of that light, which is given us to direct our wills to the fupreme good; but we feel irre-

gular paſſions to combat, *and fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul.* Divine juſtice therefore, or if you will, divine goodneſs directed by wiſdom; has ſeen proper to place us here in a mortal ſtate, where, while we enjoy a multitude of bleſſings, we are at the ſame time expoſed to a diverſity of afflictions, which in one way or other accompany us all to the grave. Here we begin to perceive the exerciſe of that Eternal juſtice which obſerves ſo minutely the ſuitableneſs of its diſpenſations, and adapts them ſo exactly to the neceſſities of His creatures. He does not deal with ſinful and imperfect man, as with man delivered from ſin and arrived at perfection. This kind and good parent wills no doubt, that his creatures ſhould enjoy as much happineſs even here, as their ſtate will admit; as much as is compatible with the ſupreme felicity to which he calls them, and therefore places them in a world furniſhed with an ample ſtore of bleſſings, *and gives them all things richly to enjoy,* But leſt *theſe* very bleſſings, ſhould by means of their irregular paſſions, corrupt, and enſlave them;

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He has decreed that they ſhould neither be ſolid, nor laſting, but *that the faſhion of the world ſhould paſs away*, and has placed them in it *as ſtrangers and pilgrims for a little while*, that *they may uſe the world, as not abuſing it*, and aſpire to more ſolid and durable good. Thus does divine juſtice exerciſe itſelf here below, towards a race of ſinful and imperfect beings. It places us all in a ſtate of trial, as in a ſchool where we are to acquire the firſt rudiments of happineſs; this ſituation is univerſally ſuitable to all men, without diſtinction whether of good or bad, and in this ſenſe it is, *that the righteous ſcarcely are ſaved, and that we muſt, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.*

But while mankind ſucceed each other in this ſublunary ſchool of happineſs, ſome liſtening to the voice of conſcience, and reaſon, contract the habits, and follow the divine laws of virtue and holineſs; while others, led away by objects of ſenſe and paſſion, contract habits of vice and diſorder, in

opposition to the divine laws; and thence some are good, and others are evil; while in the dealings of divine justice towards each, is manifested the perfect rectitude of the Supreme Governor of the universe, *who is righteous in all His ways.* To his holy and perfect laws, He has attached the just and immutable sanction of rewards and punishments; of glorious and magnificent rewards to the faithful, and obedient observer of them; and of severe and terrible chastisements, to the obstinate violater of His commands. It is true that these rewards and punishments do not take place always in this world; because it would interfere with the general good, and with that state of probation, which requires from divine justice many exceptions adapted to it. In a world where the righteous and wicked are interspersed, and where good and evil are blended, an exact retribution of either would be impracticable. But those exceptions, or rather those delays, do not make void the sanction of those laws which are immutable; for God has Himself announced in the life to come, a great day of retribution, which may well be

termed

termed the day of divine juſtice. In that day the righteous, that is, thoſe who have *wrought out their ſalvation*, having no farther need of trial, ſhall be ſeparated from the wicked; while Almighty juſtice executes on the one, and on the other, that immutable ſanction of rewards, and puniſhments, due to their reſpective conduct.

The preciſe and determinate idea of infinite juſtice is then, that invariable will, by which a total difference will be made between the virtuous and the wicked, the former moſt glorioully rewarded, and the latter ſeverely puniſhed.

If the extreme importance of the ſubject I am upon, did not require from me, all the preciſion of which I am capable, I might forbear enlarging on the preſent idea of divine juſtice, by quotations from ſcripture, becauſe in itſelf ſufficiently ſimple and natural; and as all who are converſant with holy writ, know, that it is there repeatedly expreſſed. Patriarchs, prophets, and apoſtles, concur in the ſame ſentiment. Abraham when plead-

ing with the Almighty in favour of the inhabitants of Sodom, in the eighteenth chapter of Genefis, makes this idea of Divine juftice the foundation of his argument. And in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, the Supreme Being condefcends, in the moft explicit and inftructive manner, to explain the method of His dealings with his creatures; where we fhall find this maxim exemplified, *that the righteoufnefs of the righteous fhall be upon him, and the wickednefs of the wicked fhall be upon him.*

But why do I cite particular paffages in proof of the juftice of God, when the whole hiftory of the old teftament contains nothing elfe? Such is the relation of the univerfal deluge, where a race of wicked men were extirminated from the earth, *but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* The deftruction of Sodom, from which Lot was preferved. And laftly, the whole hiftory of the Ifraelites, the alternatives of benedictions, and threatenings, of profperity, and adverfity, which followed them, according as they were obedient, or rebellious to their

Divine

Divine law-giver. The new teſtament alſo abounds with promiſes and menaces; magnificent promiſes to the righteous, and dreadful threatenings to the impenitent. I might appeal to the whole goſpel diſpenſation, which opens to our view that future œconomy that awaits us all, and unveils that awful, but infinitely intereſting ſcene of univerſal judgment, which ſhall ſucceed the reſurrection. St. Paul tells the Athenians, *that in that day God will judge the world in righteouſneſs*, that is as he expreſſes it elſewhere, *will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, honor, and immortality; eternal life: but to thoſe who obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh.*

Having hitherto explained and confirmed from ſcripture, the definition of Divine juſtice to be the conſtant and immutable will of the Supreme Being, tô diſpenſe to every one, that which is beſt adapted to his moral ſtate; the reſult of all I have ſaid, is, that

this infinite juſtice of God conſiſts in His invariably recompenſing the good, and ſeverely puniſhing the wicked.

It now remains to ſhew that ſuch juſtice, far from oppoſing the goodneſs of the Almighty, is in itſelf a branch of that goodneſs, *ſince it is goodneſs that abundantly rewards the righteous, and ſeverely puniſhes the wicked.*

With reſpect to rewards, the truth is ſufficiently evident not to need a diſcuſſion. The Supreme Judge beholding the virtuous in that ſtate of habitual holineſs, which is requiſite to fit them for happineſs; diſpenſes to them that felicity which is ſuitable to their ſtate, according to the extent of their capacities, and of his infinite love towards them. With relation to them therefore His juſtice is pure uninterrupted goodneſs.

But is it goodneſs alſo that will inflict on the diſobedient the dreadful puniſhments of a future exiſtence? Is that ſeverity of an offended God, to which ſcripture gives the terrible

terrible appellations of *indignation, wrath,* and *fury,* to be ranked in the clafs of goodnefs? Yes, I fcruple not to affirm, becaufe I can demonftrate it with the cleareft evidence. The Supreme Being, never arrays Himfelf in the terrors of His majefty, never punifhes His offending creatures, but infinite goodnefs leads Him to it; that goodnefs which I have already defined *to be His conftant will to confer happinefs, nothing but real good;* whatever form it may wear; *and even all poffible good.* Is is this which affuming the name of *juftice* will execute on the wicked thofe terrible denunciations which the gofpel contains; as I have undertaken to prove and fhall fhortly fully explain.

But alas! how far is this from the generally received idea of punitive juftice among chriftians; who inftead of confidering it as a branch of goodnefs, place it in direct oppofition; and even reprefent this attribute as moft hoftile to divine benignity; fince nothing appears at firft fight more contrary to goodnefs, than that extreme feverity which

which God will inflict on the wicked. This juſtice is therefore deſcribed, as ſtopping for-ever the courſe of divine goodneſs, which exiſts no more for the ſinner; on whom Almighty juſtice has nothing to confer throughout eternal ages, but the moſt horrible and affrighting torments. Where is the mind ſufficiently courageous to realize this ſhocking idea? to me even the taſk of refuting it is painful!

The advocates for this ſyſtem are ſufficiently ready to admit, that *in this life*, the ſeverities of God proceed from His goodneſs, and that *He chaſtizes us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holineſs.* But no ſooner does the queſtion relate *to a future life*, then the whole is changed; and according to their repreſentation, the nature of God, and of man, muſt have undergone a total revolution. Repentance will be no more; either it will be impoſſible for the wicked ever to repent; or if they do, it will avail them nothing with an implacable judge, who has no mercy for them, *but has*

forgotten

forgotten to be gracious. He will no longer, as in this life, puniſh them for their correction, but for the ſole end of rendering them miſerable. His goodneſs till then univerſal, will become limited; and will have no other object for its exertion, but the righteous, and while they experience the abundance of His love; the treaſures of wrath, the ſeverities of avenging inexorable juſtice, will be ſhowered down in unutterable anguiſh, and in never ending duration on the head of the unhappy ſinner.

But whence this ſtrange, this alarming ſubverſion in the nature of things? I might add, whence this total change in the immutable nature of God Himſelf! Ye ſouls, where candour and uprightneſs dwell, for to ſuch I addreſs myſelf particularly; will you believe that all this proceeds from *a ſingle word* ill underſtood; a word, which is univerſally acknowledged to admit of two meanings in ſcripture; and which in the preſent application, may be underſtood in two ways, one *entirely rational,* the other as

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entirely irrational and abſurd? This formidable word which has made ſuch havock in the minds of men, is the appellation of *eternal* given to the ſufferings of a future ſtate. Now though it is evident that God in His written word, as well as in His works, appeals to our reaſon, and that the ſenſe in which this term is generally underſtood, is as revolting to reaſon, as it is repugnant to the nature of God, and of things; mankind obſtinately perſiſt to underſtand it, in the abſolute ſenſe, *of an infinite and never ending duration;* and by a neceſſary conſequence are compelled to attribute to the Divine Being, under the name of juſtice, a diſpoſition abſolutely deſtructive of infinite goodneſs. They do not indeed venture to aſſert, that any thing like cruelty can reſide in His perfect and adorable nature: on the contrary, they continue to affirm, however contradictory to their hypotheſis, that the Supreme Being is infinitely good, but nevertheleſs maintain that He will inflict, on a very conſiderable number of His creatures, the

the moſt aggravated torments, throughout all eternity.

I lament the ſtrange and deplorable neceſſity which compels me to refute this ſhocking idea of divine juſtice; and that after having ſo clearly demonſtrated *that the Deity is infinitely good*; I muſt now prove that *He cannot be infinitely cruel.*

I ſhall not here examine why the word *eternal* is uſed to expreſs future ſufferings, becauſe it is poſſible I may treat of that hereafter. But I ſhall lay down as a principle which no one conteſts that the word *eternal* is made uſe of in ſcripture ſometimes to ſignify an *infinite*, ſometimes a *finite* duration. This will enable me to rectify a capital miſtake incident to thoſe who argue on this ſubject, which is determining their ideas of the juſtice of God, by the duration of ſufferings, which they ſuppoſe infinite. Though this error is important, it is nevertheleſs natural to men, who find this doctrine eſtabliſhed in the church in which they

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are born; and who receive it by inftruction at an age when their minds are incapable of difcerning the abfolute impoffibility of its truth. Accuftomed to confider this doctrine as a truth founded on revelation, and therefore inconteftable; they argue from the eternal fufferings of a life to come, that divine juftice requires fuch punifhment; and thus the very nature of that attribute becomes perverted. Now this is evidently a capital miftake, for fince the word *eternal* is fufceptible of two meanings, as no one will deny, how can we judge of the juftice of God by an équivocal term? ought we not on the contrary to determine the fenfe of an ambiguous word by the fixed and invariable idea we have of His juftice? and not take it for granted that this word applied to future fufferings implies an infinite duration; and therefore that in the divine nature, however excellent, is included, an attribute entirely contrary to goodnefs; which is as manifeft a contradiction, as to advance, that the Supreme Being is at once infinitely good, and infinitely cruel? Rather let us argue,

that

that the Deity being infinitely juſt, will inflict on the wicked, juſt and equitable puniſhments: puniſhments exactly proportioned, both in degree, and duration, to the nature and extent of their crimes; which is to ſay, in other words, that He will treat them in a manner ſuitable to their moral ſtate; which is agreeable to the natural and eternal ideas of Divine Juſtice.

If then it is by the juſtice of God we are to determine the duration of ſufferings to be finite, or infinite; let us endeavour to know why, and for what end, Divine Juſtice will puniſh the wicked in a future ſtate. If we conſult that idea of Divine Juſtice, which ought always to ſerve us as a guide, the anſwer will be eaſy. For, the juſtice of God being with reſpect to the wicked, His conſtant will to diſpenſe to them what beſt ſuits their moral ſtate, it is evident He will puniſh them in a future exiſtence, *becauſe ſuch puniſhment is beſt adapted to their moral depravity.* The queſtion is next reduced to this, *Why the future ſufferings that God will inflict on*

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the wicked are ſuitable to their moral ſtate? The anſwer to this is ſo ſimple that it would naturally preſent itſelf to an unprejudiced mind, for the moral condition of a ſinner is ſo contrary to nature, ſo hurtful and odious, ſo miſerable and deteſtable; that the Divine Being, who, from the purity and perfection of His nature, ſees ſuch a ſtate in all its deformity, cannot, nor will not ſuffer him to remain in it, *but will inflict ſufferings on the wicked hereafter, as a neceſſary mean whereby to diſengage them from ſin, and render them virtuous;* in a word, to correct and convert them, *and thus the ſufferings of another world, are real chaſtizements.* Such is the ſublime and magnificent propoſition, I am about to demonſtrate from reaſon and ſcripture; and from thence will reſult, with equal evidence, what I eſtabliſhed already, *that the infinite juſtice of God, far from being an implacable ſeverity towards the wicked, in contradiction with His infinite goodneſs, is, in itſelf, a branch awful and reſpectable indeed, but nevertheleſs, a precious and intereſting branch of infinite goodneſs.*

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The propofition I am going to eftablifh, maintains, *that God will punifh the wicked in a future ftate, for their converfion: fo that their fufferings will be real chaftizements.*

And here, the deep-rooted, and univerfal prejudices I encounter, oblige me to enter into a much more minute detail, and collect a greater variety of proofs, in order to carry conviction into the mind, than would otherwife be neceffary; that by fome one of thefe, I may convince underftandings, which, though prepoffeffed, yet retain upright and honeft hearts.

The firft proof I fhall bring in favor of this truth, and which, if admitted, were fingly fufficient; is the infinite love of God for the finner, by which He wills their converfion, and their life; and by which it is impoffible that He fhould ever inflict any fuffering on them, but with a view to their converfion and happinefs. In treating of the Holinefs of the Divine Nature, I have proved the infinite love of God for the finner, and that from

this love, arifes His implacable hatred to fin, as an infurmountable obftacle in the way of their happinefs.

Thus the fufferings He inflicts on them, whether in this, or in a future world, are defigned as remedies and cures for that dreadful infection of the foul. It is an eternal truth, founded on the very nature of God, which is love; that he chaftizes all the fons of men, the comparatively juft, and unjuft, *for their profit, that they may be partakers of His holinefs.*

Let us not fay, in order to evade the force of this argument, that the love which God has for the wicked in this life, will, in the next, be converted into hatred; as indeed it muft be, if it could lead Him to inflict eternal torments upon them. And is there then a time when Divine love can be changed into hatred, when God Himfelf can alter, and this period, fhall it be the univerfal judgment? Juft heavens! As well might we prefume to affirm, that there is a period when He fhall

ceafe to be; for the one is as poffible as the other. No, the love of God will never change, becaufe it cannot; for His love, like all his attributes is infinite, immutable, and eternal. If there ever was a moment, a fingle inftant, when He loved the finner; if He loved him when He created him, when He protefted with an oath, that He defired his converfion and his life; if He loved him, when for his fake, He fpared not His own Son, He will love him with the fame love throughout infinite ages, and as foon might he ceafe to exift, as ceafe to love.

With frail and mortal man, this tranfition from love to hatred, is not only very poffible, but, alas! very frequent; the object that appears amiable one day, may on the morrow exite averfion and difguft, and but too often hatred. But how can any thing like this take place in the omnicient Creator of men, *to whom all His works are known from the begining?* Were the wicked culpable at the inftant when they were created? If then, their Maker produced them by an effect of

His love, that love was infinite, and it is impoſſible that futurity ſhould ever diſcover any thing relative to them, which He did not perfectly know at the moment of their creation; it is then impoſſible that any thing ſhould change His love into hatred. When His almighty fiat called them into exiſtence, His glance pervaded every ſcene through which they were to paſs: He knew the long reſiſtance they would oppoſe to His offers of mercy and grace, he knew the obduracy into which long habits of ſin would bring them: but *God who is greater than our hearts* knew alſo by what *treaſures of wrath*, by what ſeverities of juſtice, He ſhould at length overcome this obdurate reſiſtance: by what powerful, but nevertheleſs ſalutary means, *He ſhould take away the ſtony heart, and give us a heart of fleſh;* in a word he *knew how to work in us, to will and to do of his good pleaſure;* and therefore His love determined to confer exiſtence on creatures, whoſe moral ſtate could, in the courſe of time, be made as perfect and amiable as was their natural ſtate, at the

moment

moment of their creation. Let us then conclude that the diſpoſitions of Almighty goodneſs can never change with reſpect to us; but that however ſevere the puniſhments of a future world may be, they are deſigned for our converſion, and are real corrections.

I draw my ſecond proof of this truth, from thoſe general rules which ſcripture conſtantly attributes to God, in the diſpenſation of ſufferings; theſe are three in number. The firſt informs us when, and on what occaſions, He will puniſh the wicked; the ſecond, how much, or to what degree; the third, when this puniſhment will ceaſe, and His favor be reſtored to them; the reſult of which will ſhew, that the Supreme Being never chaſtiſes but with a view to correct, and that the future puniſhments of the wicked, are deſigned to bring about their converſion and happineſs.

The firſt rule which divine juſtice obſerves in the diſpenſation of ſufferings, *is never to*

proceed to extreme rigour, till every gentle means has been exhausted without effect; so that torments and sufferings will only be employed, as far as they shall be absolutely requisite for the conversion of the sinner.

If all mankind *could be delivered from the bondage of sin, and brought to God* by methods of gentleness and beneficence, He would never make use of any other; for He declares in his word, *that He doth not willingly afflict, or grieve the children of men: Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that He should return from his ways and live? He would draw them with cords of a man, with bands of love*; and when the necessity of their situation requires severity, it is call'd *doing His strange work; and bringing to pass His act, His strange act.* Thence He proclaims Himself to be *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.* Thence *the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long suffering*, by *which He invites men to repentance*;

repentance; but above all, thence the greateſt and moſt inconceivable inſtance of His infinite love to ſinners, in *the gift of His only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life:* So true is it that divine juſtice never proceeds to extreme rigour, till every gentle means has been exhauſted without effect; and till ſeverity is thereby become neceſſary, as the only mean of converſion.

Beſides the reaſons that we ſee in the nature of perfect goodneſs, for this firſt rule in the diſpenſation of puniſhment; we can diſcern another relative to ourſelves. The general deſign of God is to excite in the hearts of his creatures a ſincere and ardent love. *My ſon give me thine heart,* is the language of all His dealings; He is a kind, a gracious Father, who will be loved with all our ſoul and with all our ſtrength; we muſt have no will but His, and conſtantly, ſincerely, and univerſally ſacrifice our own, with chearfulneſs to His moſt perfect, and excellent will. This is the holineſs, the

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ſanctification to which we are all called. But if ſuch is our vocation, the Divine Being will on his part ſhew himſelf to us, as infinitely amiable, and worthy to be beloved; and it is not by ſeverity, by ſtripes this is to be effected; but by gentleneſs, by tokens of love, and affection. *He therefore leaves not Himſelf without a witneſs, in that He does us good.* He diſcovers Himſelf to us as a tender parent, conſtantly concerned for the good of His children, and labouring to advance their happineſs. Thoſe who by a wiſe improvement of the means granted them, ſhew themſelves obedient to the inſtructions of His word, and providence; are *drawn by the bands of love.* Such, have no need of the ſeverities of an offended God. He may indeed ſee fit for the exerciſe of their faith, and patience, to ſend them trials and afflictions in this world, *for what ſon is he whom the father chaſteneth not?* but ſuch afflictions tend to detach them from the world, and to make them more fit for heaven; they are the *ſcourgings of a ſon who is owned and received.*

But thofe on the contrary who make the bleffing of Divine Goodnefs fubfervient only to their worldly lufts; *who love darknefs better than light*, who neglect the means of inftruction, and falvation, which are multiplied in the midft of them; and live in a total forgetfulnefs of God, and of His will, to gratify their own; in a word, thofe *who defpife the riches of His goodnefs, forbearance, and long-fuffering, not knowing that the goodnefs of God leads to repentance*, for thofe, the extreme rigour of punifhment will be abfolutely neceffary in order to their falvation. For how fhall thofe arrive at the knowledge of the truth who hate it, and prefer darknefs; or acquire that docility of heart, *without which they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven?* For fuch, feverity alone is fuitable, not indeed with an immediate defign to create in them the love of their Maker; but to deftroy thofe obftacles which His love could not conquer; and to give efficacy to thofe means of inftruction, which were before ineffectual. The wrath of God muft humble and fubdue fuch

proud

proud hearts; and bitter pangs of diſtreſs muſt make them feel, what they were told in vain, *that God is not mocked;* and that though an infinitely kind and merciful father, He is alſo infinitely powerful, will be heard when He ſpeaks, and obeyed when He commands. Thus we are told, that *the wicked by the hardneſs and impenitence of their heart, treaſure up for themſelves wrath, againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,* and that *if we ſin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth,* by Jeſus Chriſt, *there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſary.* Let us now examine *how, and to what degree,* divine juſtice will employ this method of converſion.

If the firſt rule which divine juſtice follows in the diſpenſation of puniſhment, is never to proceed to rigour, till every other method has been tried in vain; the ſecond is *to employ that rigour only ſo much, and ſo long,*

as

ſhall be neceſſary to the deſtruction of ſin, and the converſion of the ſinner.

This ſecond rule carries its own evidence with it, and is a neceſſary conſequence of the firſt already eſtabliſhed. For when every other method has failed of ſucceſs, ſeverity muſt be employed, and will be made uſe of by God to ſubdue ſin, and bring about the ſanctification, and ſalvation of the ſinner; to what degrees or duration ſoever it may be neceſſary to extend this diſcipline, in order to obtain the end. This then is a war, an implacable, and eternal war againſt ſin; a terrible war, which can only be terminated by the deſtruction of that hidious monſter in the ſoul of the wicked. The Being whoſe deſigns are immutable, will not change his purpoſe; this change muſt take place in the ſinner; who muſt *be transformed* however painful the operation; muſt become *a new man*, a *new creature*, and for this end the divine judgments muſt make war upon him.

But it is not enough to appeal to reafon in vindication of this truth: I will confirm it yet farther from fcripture. Ifaiah ex-preffes it, when he declares, *there is no peace, faith my God, to the wicked.* But fome will object, that if according to this divine declaration *there is no peace to the wicked,* they muft be loft without poffibility of re-turn. Ah! take heed, left by precipitating your judgment you falfify this facred decla-ration, and apply to it a meaning which it has not, nor ever can have. To underftand it aright, it muft be confronted with that paffage, where the God of truth confirms with an oath, that *He wills the converfion and life of a finner.* Oppofite as thefe de-clarations may feem, it is neverthelefs the Supreme Being who fpeaks in both, and who fpeaks of the finner: and as no con-tradiction can refide in Him; there muft be a fenfe in which they perfectly agree. Why then, let me afk, *is there no peace to the wicked?* is it founded on the hatred of their Maker, who wills their eternal and irrevoc-able mifery? No, He declares that He wills their

their converſion and life. The reaſon is manifeſtly this; that ſo long as the wicked remain in an impenitent ſtate, they cannot obtain that life and happineſs, for the enjoyment of which they were created. They *muſt therefore turn from their wickedneſs* in order *to live*, and till this revolution is accompliſhed, they will moſt aſſuredly experience the effects of this formidable, and implacable war; which the Almighty has proclaimed againſt them, in the words already quoted.

If any thing more expreſs ſhould be needful upon this head, let us attend to the words of Jeremiah; *Behold the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind, it ſhall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord ſhall not return until he hath done it, and until He hath performed the intent of his heart; in the latter days ye ſhall conſider it. Theſe latter days*, are made uſe of by the prophets, to denote that more reſplendent light, that farther manifeſtation of divine mercy,

mercy, that *intent of His heart*, relative to the univerfal falvation of men; *which was according to the eternal purpofe, which He purpofed in Chrift Jefus our Lord.* Conformable to which the prophet declares, *that the fierce anger of the Lord fhall not return* UNTIL HE HATH PERFORMED THE INTENT OF HIS HEART; thofe purpofes of eternal and univerfal falvation, the fuller manifeftation of which, was referved *for the latter days.*

In Ezekiel alfo we find the fame idea conveyed under the image of a veffel of brafs, totally corrupted by inveterate ruft; and the fufferings of the wicked, reprefented by the figure of a confuming fire. *Set it empty upon the coals, that the brafs of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthinefs of it may be molten in it, that the fcum of it may be confumed; fhe hath wearied me with her lies, and her great fcum went not forth out of her: her fcum fhall be in the fire. In thy filthinefs is lewdnefs: becaufe I have purged thee and thou waft not purged, thou fhalt not*

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be purged from thy filthineſs any more, till I have cauſed my fury to reſt upon thee. I the Lord have ſpoken it, it ſhall come to paſs, and I will do it, I will not go back, neither will I ſpare, neither will I repent. How formidable a menace is here! a declaration from the Moſt High, that when the gentle methods of his grace have been inſufficient to cleanſe the wicked from their filthineſs; He will employ the dreadful rigours of his *indignation;* which are compared *to a conſuming fire.* Nor will He go back, neither will he ſpare, till the wicked *are purged from their filthineſs.*

Laſtly on this ſubject, I recommend to my reader the peruſal of the twenty-ſixth chapter of Leviticus, from the fourteenth verſe to the end; when he will perceive the ſecond rule of divine juſtice clearly laid down, and expreſſed in the moſt ſtriking manner; and the chaſtiſement of God encreaſed and prolonged, in proportion to the obduracy, and reſiſtance of the wicked; till at length their obſtinacy is overcome.

Let us not quit this ſubject, without making one important reflection to which it naturally leads, concerning the judgment we ought to form of the terrible nature of the ſufferings of a future ſtate ; from the difficulty of the effect they are intended to produce. How formidable muſt be thoſe ſufferings which can ſoften the obdurate heart, break aſunder the many chains by which the ſoul of the ſinner is held in bondage, root up the moſt inveterate habits, deſtroy the ſubtle poiſon of unruly and ſinful paſſions, whoſe infection has ſpread, and corrupted all the powers of the ſoul, all the faculties of the mind, all the ſentiments of the heart; in a word, ſuch ſufferings, as ſhall entirely change the ſinner, give him in all reſpects different ideas, different views, taſtes, and inclinations.

St. Peter remarks, *that if the righteous ſcarcely are ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?* as if he had ſaid, if ſo many trials and afflictions are neceſſary for the ſalvation of the juſt, of thoſe who have

have acquired the habits of virtue, and are ſincerely attached to their duty; how great and terrible both in degree and duration will the ſufferings be, which are reſerved for thoſe, whom long habits of ſin have corrupted and hardened? With what juſt abhorrence ſhould it fill us for ſin, that fatal enemy of our peace, that tyrant of the ſoul, from whom it will require ſuch dreadful ſufferings to free us! The goſpel, that diſpenſation of mercy, which was given that we might *flee from the wrath to come;* that ineffable *gift of the only begotten Son of God,* whereby *whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but obtain everlaſting life,* however compaſſionate to the penitent offender, ſpeaks nothing but terror and alarm to the guilty and hardened ſinner. How ſtriking, how awful, and at the ſame time how merciful, are the repreſentations of future torments! Let us collect the leading features of the ſtriking picture, and we ſhall ſee *that it is* indeed *a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* It is repreſented under the figure of *periſhing, of being caſt*

into outer darkneſs, of a worm that never dies, of a fire that is never quenched, of a lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone, into which the wicked ſhall be caſt; and where they ſhall *periſh eternally.* And though neither the word puniſh is here to be underſtood, as a total extinction of being; nor can that of *eternal* imply endleſs duration; nevertheleſs they are undoubtedly employed to ſignify bitter anguiſh, deep and durable diſtreſs; which can only be terminated by a total change in the diſpoſition of the ſufferer. And this leads us to the third rule of Divine Juſtice, in the diſpenſation of ſufferings, and informs us *when the Supreme Being ceaſes puniſhment.*

As it is againſt *ſin,* that the wrath of the Lord is declared; *He will conſtantly pardon, and receive into favor, the ſincerely penitent offender.* Repentance appeaſes divine anger, and diſarms its juſtice; becauſe it accompliſhes the end infinite goodneſs has in view, even when arrayed in the awful majeſty of avenging juſtice; which was ſevere

becauſe

becaufe the moral ftate of the finner required fuch difcipline; and which when that ftate is reverfed, by converfion and holinefs; will have nothing to beftow fuitable to it, but the delightful manifeftations of mercy, and forgivenefs.

But here fome will afk, whether fuch repentance is fufficient thus to difarm Almighty Juftice; after having by a long and obftinate difobedience audacioufly violated the holy laws of God? is repentance a fufficient fatisfaction, a fuitable reparation for the offence committed againft infinite majefty; a proper vindication of the divine commands; and can repentance, however fincere, annihilate what is paft? fhall the finner be thus acquitted and treated as if he had not offended?

There are many things I could advance in anfwer to this objection. I could prove that every the leaft degree of refentment and vengeance is a carnal emotion of the mind; that it belongs only to human na-

ture; and to that, in its degraded and animal ſtate; that nothing reſembling theſe ſentiments can be found in the Deity; that He does not, properly ſpeaking, inflict ſufferings, becauſe the ſinner has offended, but to the end that he may ſin no more: thus the divine chaſtiſements relate to the paſt, only, as they are connected with the future; that with reſpect to the Divine Majeſty, our evil, any more than *our good, cannot extend;* no ſelf-intereſt, therefore, can incline Him to inflict puniſhment, no dignity, perfectly independent on human actions, can induce Him to ſeverity. That the honor of the divine law is ſufficiently guarded by the puniſhment of the ſinner, as long as he remains impenitent, and by the faithful and obedient adherence to the penitent offender; that Divine juſtice is always ſatisfied when it attains its end; and that this end is always attained, whenever the ſinner is brought to repentance.

But inſtead of inſiſting on theſe arguments, however juſt, I will call the attention to

thoſe clear and remarkable declarations of God Himſelf in his word. And firſt, in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, where He ſays, *if the wicked turn from all his ſins that he hath committed, and keep all my ſtatutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſurely live, and ſhall not die.* And ſhall not his former ſins be brought into accoumt againſt him? No; For the Lord goes on to declare, that *all his tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, ſhall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteouſneſs that he hath done he ſhall live.* But why will not Divine Juſtice puniſh former offences? The Being, againſt whom they were committed, condeſcends to inſtruct us in the reaſon: *Have I any pleaſure at all that the wicked ſhould die? ſaith the Lord God, and not that he ſhould return from his ways and live?* And is not this in expreſs terms to aſſert, that to puniſh the ſinner after his converſion, for his former ſins, would be, *to take pleaſure in the death of the wicked?* or in other words, it would be hatred, revenge, and cruelty; odious and horrible ſentiments which can never be found

in a Being who desires the happiness of His creatures, and whose severities have this end in view. Therefore the happiness of the sinner is inseparable from his conversion.

A second answer to the objection, not less positive than that already quoted, may be found in the first chapter of Isaiah, where the Supreme Being, after reproaching the children of Israel for their extreme corruption and hypocrisy, says, *wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.* After which He adds, *come now, and let us reason together.* According to the apprehensions of those whose opinions I am combating, the Judge might alledge *that they who commit such things are worthy of death.* And what can the criminal bring in his defence? Nothing, certainly to efface his past transgressions; though through divine grace, and divine chastisements, he may, conformably to the command of his Maker, *have washed and made him clean, and put away the evil of his doings; have ceased to do evil,*

and learnt to do well. We know *that the Judge of all the earth will do right,* Attend, therefore, to the ſentence; *though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red, like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool.*

Another, and not leſs remarkable, declaration is alſo to be found in Iſaiah: *let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* And leſt this readineſs to forgive ſhould appear incomprehenſible to men *who are evil,* Divine Goodneſs condeſcends to account for His conduct. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways; and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

And after all theſe declarations by the mouth of the prophets, on the part of God; *He hath*

hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, who, in his gospel, is the messenger of such terrible threatenings to the wicked, and is charged with the execution of them at the last day. He represents the Deity as a *Father who had two sons,* under whom are included the righteous and the wicked. The younger requires of his father the portion of goods alloted to him, and takes his journey into a far country, where wasting his substance with riotous living, he is reduced by famine to the most extreme want: in this calamity, which is meant to signify the chastisements of the wicked, and which, from its severity becomes salutary: the young man *comes to himself, and resolves to go to his father;* here we behold the returning penetent. Let us observe how the Parent of mankind receives such. *While his son was yet afar off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him;* and instead of answering the confession of his unworthiness with severity, or reproach, he commands *his servants to bring forth the best robe and put it*

on

on him; to put a ring on his finger, and ſhoes on his feet; and to make ready the feſtival which was to celebrate his return. Such is the conduct of the father with his diſobedient, but penitent ſon; whereby our divine maſter confirms, in a very ſtriking example, the declaration of Iſaiah: *that when the wicked forſakes his way, and returns unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon him.* But his dealings with the elder ſon are yet more remarkable, yet more affecting. He returns from the field, and being informed of the reaſon of the rejoicing he heard within, *is angry and will not go in*; upon which his father comes out and entreats him; but he giving way to confuſed and carnal ideas of juſtice, makes to him the ſame objection which may ariſe in the minds of many of my readers: *Lo, theſe many years do I ſerve thee, neither tranſgreſſed I, at any time, thy commandments; and yet thou never gaveſt me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as ſoon as this, thy ſon is come, who has devoured thy living with harlots, thou haſt killed for him the fatted calf.*

This

This complaint being founded on facts, appears both juſt and reaſonable. Let us therefore attentively conſider the anſwer, and remember, that it is God who ſpeaks in it: *ſon; thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.* Is not the enjoyment of every true good, in the preſence of his father, ſufficient for the elder? Or, does the eſſence of happineſs conſiſt in the excluſion of others? Now with reſpect to the younger, his father declares, *that it was meet they ſhould make merry and be glad, for a brother who was dead and is alive again; was loſt, and is found.* How ſublime, how truly divine is this anſwer! The elder ſon made no mention of the repentance of his brother, eſteeming it as nothing, while the tender and compaſſionate father looked upon that repentance as every thing; and the whole of the argument is founded upon it; *thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was loſt, and is found;* therefore *it was meet we ſhould make merry and be glad.* How truly might we gather from this reply, that the ways of the Almighty, are not our ways! And how

ſtrongly

ſtrongly does it evince this important truth, that the Divine Being will conſtantly pardon every ſinner who returns to him, by a ſincere repentance.

Such are the three immutable rules, which Divine Juſtice obſerves in diſpenſing ſufferings; which I ſhall not recapitulate, becauſe they are founded in reaſon, and poſſitively proved from ſcripture: but I ſhall obſerve, that if theſe declarations are indeed, the words of God, the ſecond proof of the ſublime propoſition, I mean to eſtabliſh, muſt be true alſo; viz. *That all the puniſhments, which will be inflicted on the wicked, in a future ſtate, are deſigned for their converſion; ſo that they are real corrections.*

Thirdly, and laſtly, I ſhall ſhew, by a variety of paſſages from ſcripture, the abſolute impoſſibility of the eternal duration of ſufferings, becauſe, thoſe paſſages are incompatible with ſuch a ſignification. I ſhall reduce them under three claſſes, to avoid confuſion.

And

The firſt claſs comprehends all ſuch texts as compare the duration of divine ſeverity, with that of divine favor. The Pſalmiſt ſays, ſpeaking of God, *His anger endureth but for a moment, in his favor is life;* and the reaſon of this, evidently is, that His anger is exerciſed for a time, that He may diſplay the effects of His favor, throughout all eternity. His anger is a tranſient mean; His favor, an eſtabliſhed end. Were it otherwiſe, alas! And were the ſufferings of the wicked to laſt forever, we ſhould be obliged to reverſe the text: for this mortal life, the only period in which they could enjoy any portion of divine favor, is ſurely but a moment, compared with an eternal duration! But thanks be to God, *His word* every where contradicts this dreadful ſuppoſition; and it is not leſs true now, than when He declared to His ancient people, *In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlaſting kindneſs will I have mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy redeemer. For the mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindneſs ſhall*

ſhall not depart from thee; neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed, ſaith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.

I proceed next to another claſs of paſſages, if poſſible, more deciſive than the former; which expreſsly declare, that, *the Lord will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever.* And do we not ſpeak the ſame language with the Pſalmiſt, when we maintain, that future ſuffering, which is *the wrath to come,* will not laſt eternally, becauſe, *He will not keep his anger for ever?* The conteſt which is to deſtroy ſin, will be long and painful to ſinners, but *as they are not ſtronger than God,* He muſt at length prevail, *for He will not always chide.* How comforting is it to the ſoul oppreſſed and terrified almoſt to deſpair, by the weight of her ſins, and the horrid apprehenſion of eternal ſufferings, *to taſte this good word of the Lord,* which our Saviour has aſſured us, *ſhall never paſs away,* though heaven and earth ſhould be removed. How delightful to find in it, thoſe comforting words of the prophet

prophet Jeremiah: *the Lord will not caſt off for ever: but though he cauſe grief, yet will he have compaſſion, according to the multitude of his mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.*

I come now to the third claſs, which comprehend all thoſe paſſages, deſcribing the Supreme Being as our Creator. And theſe, like all the former, are proofs founded on the higheſt authority, that of God Himſelf; and yet this is not all, for as His word is an addreſs to our reaſon, ſo He condeſcends to reaſon with us, that He may convey light and conviction to their ſouls; which is evident in all thoſe texts, repreſenting the Divine Being as our Maker. Creation, is our primeval title to Divine love, and beneficence: the gift of exiſtence is the firſt, and fundamental bleſſing; the ſeal, and token, of every other. We know from thence, that He is good, and full of love to us; becauſe, when He had no need of us, He created us; and in confering exiſtence upon us, we, and our happineſs, are become His care.

care. By that act of wisdom, goodness, and power, the Creator has undertaken the charge of our happiness: and, had He not certainly known He could accomplish it, He would never have given us being. But let us attend to those inspired words of the Psalmist, which speak the language of confidence and assurance: *the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever; forsake not the work of thine own hands. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.* And what is that concern so interesting to me? What, but my happiness! the utmost happiness of which my nature is capable. Now, from the first moment of my being, to the present, He has not ceased to conduct me towards, and to prepare me for, that celestial happiness: and had I constantly adhered to the salutary dictates of His providence and grace, and not turned aside to do mine own will; I should, doubtless, have made a far greater progress in the career of happiness. But how remote soever I may yet be from this desirable attainment, yet I know *that the*

 Lord

Lord will perfect that which concerneth me; and that whatever means my moral ſtate may require, will be made uſe of to elevate me to perfection and felicity. But how do I know it? *becauſe His mercy endureth for-ever.* This is the ſolid baſis on which my everlaſting hopes repoſe. This mercy is inexhauſtible, can never be tired, nor fail of the time requiſite for the execution of its deſigns; becauſe, to Him *a thouſand years are as one day,* and, eternity is His. Thus, whatever the freedom of my will has reſiſted here, will be accompliſhed hereafter, where I ſhall be chaſtiſed, and ſaved from thoſe ſins that place an obſtacle between me and my happineſs; where Divine Goodneſs will, if neceſſary, employ the moſt rigourous and terrible means, to bring me to ſupreme felicity; *for He will not forſake the work of His hands.* So long, therefore, as it ſhall be true, that I am His work; ſo long will it be true alſo, that He cannot abandon me; and theſe admirable words of David, which I apply to myſelf, relate equally to all my brethren, to every ſon of Adam.

But

But, muſt I now compare theſe luminous and exhilarating truths, with the gloomy, and diſcomforting opinion I am combating? Alas! were the torments of the wicked of infinite duration, theſe ſublime truths would not be ſuch for the reprobate; it would not be true for them, *that the Lord would perfect that which concerneth them!* It would not be true for them, *that the mercy of the Lord endureth forever!* Nor would it be true, *that He doth not forſake the work of his hands!* Forſake did I ſay, Ah! ſhall I have the courage to follow this dreadful ſyſtem through all its revolting conſequences? Happy were it for them, did he forſake them; did He utterly abandon, and leave them a prey to death and the grave, where annihilation might ſwallow them up forever. No; His almighty power muſt be diſplayed in their reſurrection; in creating them, as it were, a ſecond time, in giving them an immortal exiſtence, to the end, that the fierce anger, the implacable terrors of the Lord, may be diſcharged upon them throughout all eternity. And is this *the Father of mercies!*

cies! The Parent of the human race? No; it is the phantom of error. Gracious God! By what prodigy of blindneſs, art thou thus miſrepreſented, in the midſt of thoſe very ſinners, for whom thou gaveſt thy well-beloved Son, *that He might perfect that which concerneth them.*

But I turn from this terrifying aſpect, to finiſh my third claſs of texts, with thoſe comforting and reſtoring words in Iſaiah; where we ſhall hear our merciful Creator declare that He doth not puniſh or reject forever. *For thus ſaith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones;* (that is, ſuch as my chaſtiſements have humbled and converted) *For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wrath: for the ſpirit ſhould fail before me, and the ſouls which I have made.* What a declaration is here! *He will not contend forever*, but till the heart of

of the ſinner is become humble and contrite. Then will the High and Holy One, receive him into his preſence, *and revive his ſpirit*: and he will act thus, for the eternal reaſon Himſelf declares, leſt the ſouls to whom he hath given exiſtence, ſhould fail before Him. Now will not the ſame reaſon ſubſiſt at the great day of accounts? Will it not be equally true then, as now; that he is the maker of our ſouls?

The paſſages which come under the fourth head, expreſs the univerſal deſtination of men, to ſalvation, happineſs, and life eternal: and are ſo many declarations abſolutely incompatable with the eternal duration of ſufferings? Were it otherwiſe, it would not be true, that all men were created for happineſs; but on the contrary, that two very oppoſite deſtinations were aſſigned them; ſome to felicity, others to infinite miſery. Such, however, is not the language of the divine word: *God our Saviour will have all men to be ſaved; He is the Saviour of all men:* and in order to announce this

grand truth, as a thing that will infallibly take place, and which will be equally certain and univerſal as our condemnation to mortality on earth: we are told, *that as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation,* (to death) *even ſo, by the righteouſneſs of one, the free gift came upon all men unto juſtification of life.* Thus we ſee, how expreſsly the word of God declares the univerſal ſalvation of mankind to be His will and purpoſe; and what will aſſuredly take place.

Now, if it be true, that ſcripture agrees with itſelf, and with reaſon, it is evident that we muſt underſtand every diſpenſation of the Almighty, as correſponding with the great end He has in view; the univerſal ſalvation of His creatures. The pain and ſufferings of the world to come, cannot, without doing violence to reaſon and ſcripture, be ſeparated from this great ſcheme, which Almighty Wiſdom has planed; and muſt therefore be *means* of ſalvation to the reprobate; real chaſtiſements, inflicted for their

converſion

converſion and amendment: conſequently by the word *eternal,* we are not to underſtand *an infinite,* but *a limited,* though probably to ſome, a very long duration.

The ancient covenant made with Abraham and his poſterity, was peculiar to the jewiſh nation, and excluded every other. It was to ſerve as the foundation of that new, and better covenant, which the Divine Being deſigned of univerſal extent; and to which it was to give place. This new and univerſal covenant, with all nations, by which the gentiles ſhould be called, and the *heathen become an inheritance;* is repeatedly foretold in the prophetic books. It is therefore a truth, founded on the records of that ancient covenant, *that its duration was intended only for a ſeaſon, and that it ſhould give place to another.* It is nevertheleſs, together with its rites, and ceremonies, repeatedly called *eternal:* and if an infinite duration, is to be underſtood by that term; the Old and New Teſtament are in oppoſition to each other; nay, the former is in a ſtate of diſa-

greement with itſelf. How therefore do divines in every communion of chriſtians, adjuſt this difficulty? They agree to take reaſon for their guide, and very juſtly, and rationally decide, that the word *eternal* only implies a *long*, but *limited* duration; and that nothing more was meant, than the continuance of the ancient covenant, till it had anſwered the important purpoſes for which it was eſtabliſhed, of preparing the way for another, and univerſal covenant, by which it was to be abrogated.

Now this method of reaſoning, ſo juſt and ſatisfactory, is not more natural in this inſtance, than in its application to future puniſhments. For ſince the word of God, which brings to man the glad tidings of eternal ſalvation, at the ſame time calls future ſufferings *eternal;* it is clear, that by a parity of reaſon, with that already quoted, we are not to underſtand that word in its abſoſolute ſenſe; as it would thereby be in manifeſt contradiction with the revealed will of our Maker; but that we are to take it in a

ſenſe

ſenſe agreeable to the word of God, to what we know of His nature, and to the powers and faculties which he has given us for our direction: and this we ſhall do, if we admit that it implies a permanence, and perpetuity; till ſuch time, as by the deſtruction of ſin, and converſion of the ſinner, the paternal views of our Creator ſhall be fulfilled.

There remains laſtly, and under the fifth head, yet, one very remarkable text, where our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, gives the name of chaſtiſement to future ſufferings: *theſe*, ſays He, ſpeaking of the wicked, *ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment.* Now, though the word puniſhment is made uſe of in our verſions; in the original greek the word κόλασις, is peculiarly applicable to the pruning of trees, which therefore implies correction, or chaſtiſement; and was in uſe to expreſs that correction, by which men were made better, like to trees, who have undergone the operation of pruning, or lopping off the dead, or unfruitful branches.

In

In my preliminary difcourfe I promifed to cite no human authorities, in proof of what I fhould advance; hitherto I have adhered to reafon, and fcripture; but, as in this particular inftance, I cannot quote the latter in the vulgar tongue, I am obliged to have recourfe to the original, and to prove to my reader, by fuch authorities as cannot be fufpected, that the greek word κόλασις fignifies *chaftifement.* And thefe authorities fo refpectable, are two learned Divines; one, the illuftrious Grotius, in *his rights of war and peace;* the other, the celebrated Wyttenbach, in his *Effay on doctrinal theology.* Grotius fays exprefsly, *that the kind of punifhment which tends to the improvement of the criminal; is what the philofophers called among other things* κόλασις or chaftifement;* And Wyttenbach, who writes this paffage from Grotius, fays, *that God, in the infliction of fufferings, has three ends in view; the*

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* Droit de la Guerre et de la paix, de la traduction de Barbeyrac. Liv. II. chap. 20. § 7.

the firſt of which, is the correction of the offender, in order to his future amendment. And that the Greeks frequently gave to ſuch ſufferings the name κόλασις.

Thus we ſee from unqueſtionable evidence, that the Son of God himſelf, calls future puniſhment *chaſtiſement:* now a never ending chaſtiſement, is a contradiction in terms. The word *eternal* muſt therefore, in that connection, ſignify *a long and dreadful correction*, which will never ceaſe, till ſin is ſubdued, and the heart of the ſinner diſpoſed, and properly prepared to experience the efficacy of divine redemption; *that power of God*, whereby the Son was ſent *to be the Saviour of the world, that he, by the grace of God, ſhould taſte death for every man; not for our ſins only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world.*

If then the ſufferings of a future ſtate, are ſo dreadful by their duration, they are not leſs

lefs fo by their nature. Let us not infer from the word *chaftifement*, made ufe of by our Saviour, that the torments of Hell will bear any refemblance to the corrections of the prefent world; otherwife than as both are intended to promote the fame falutary end, for in every other refpect, both of degree, and duration, they will be fo entirely different, that in the original language of the new teftament, they do not even bear the fame names. Scripture defcribing the chaftifements of this life, in the Epiftle to the Hebrews, makes ufe of the greek word παιδεια which fignifies the *correction of a child*, which is inflicted *with the rod. Whom the Lord loveth, he chafteneth and fcourgeth*, (or ftrikes with the rod) *every fon whom he receiveth.* But the great and terrible chaftifements of a future ftate are expreffed by another word; and one that denotes, as I have already faid, a long and fevere chaftifement with a two-edged fword, which will cut to the quick, in order to fever, and lop off every dead and corrupted branch.

Such

Such are fome of the principal declarations of fcripture, which contain the third proof of this great truth; *that the punifhments which the Divine Being inflicts on the wicked hereafter, are fo many corrections to bring about their converfion; and are real chaftifements.* Each of thefe refpectable declarations taken independent of the reft, as they proceed from the God of all truth, ought to be of fufficient weight for our conviction. But what tranfcendent light muft refult from their union! Let us endeavor to collect their fcattered rays into one focus, and let that focus be our heart, that by their lively ardor, each of us may be animated by divine love!

Oh Eternal Father of us all! *Thine anger then endures but for a moment,* becaufe thy feverity is only one of the means, by which thine infinite wifdom leads us to Thee; *but in thy favor is life,* an eternity of life, to the end *that Thou mighteft have mercy upon all.* It is for this reafon *that Thou wilt not always chide,* nor reject for ever, becaufe of the

the *souls thou haſt made, leſt they ſhould fail before thee; for thou wilt not abandon the work of thine hands.* Conformable then to the immutable deſigns of thine all-powerful Will, Thou wilt perfect that which concerns us, ſo as in the end, *to be the Saviour of all* without exception: yes; even the Saviour of thoſe who are now the ſlaves of ſin, and hardened ſo as to reſiſt every gentle method, which thy grace employs for their ſanctification. For ſuch, thou haſt prepared a laſt and terrible expedient, to be exerciſed only, *if need be*, a rigorous, *an eternal;* in a word, a juſt *chaſtiſement*, proportioned, both in degree and duration, to the reſiſtance and obduracy of the unhappy ſinners who have incurred it. But to preſerve us from incurring this tremendous puniſhment, Thou haſt given thy well-beloved Son, and haſt conſtituted him our King, and our Judge; that he may reduce to thine empire, ſuch, among us, as reſiſt Thee; may *break them with a rod of iron, and daſh them in pieces like a potter's veſſel;* and when, by theſe means, their hearts *are broken and humbled;* then will

will this Saviour, this high Prieſt, this King, bring them all to *dwell with Thee in thy high and holy place:* and thus, *having finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt him to do,* He will ſurrender at Thy feet the ſcepter, which, for this important purpoſe, Thou haſt given him, *and will deliver up the kingdom to* Thee, *that* thou *mayeſt be all in all.*

I think we may now conclude that we have eſtabliſhed a fundamental principle whence to form conſiſtant ideas of the Juſtice, and ſeverity of God; who puniſhes the wicked *that he might bleſs them, by turning them every one from their iniquities.* How different from that implacable ſeverity, which, under the ſpecious title of juſtice, would be inſatiable vengeance, infinite cruelty, incompatible with goodneſs!

If we allow that ſeverity is a branch of goodneſs, it will ſet that amiable attribute in its true light, and prevent us from falling into the dangerous illuſion, of expecting nothing from Divine Love, but mercies and favors.

favors. We ſhould not only conſider the *end*, but the *means* of conducting us to felicity; which will be ſevere, *upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil.* The goodneſs of the Deity is as enlightened as it is infinite; it is a goodneſs inſeparable from wiſdom, and conſequently firm, and exempt from ſuch falſe compaſſion as ariſes from weakneſs. An inflexible, and inexorable goodneſs, which without being influenced by our cries and ſupplications, will complete its deſigns; in a word, a juſt and real goodneſs, which will treat us in a way ſuitable to our moral ſtate, and by which the ſufferings that are to elevate us to ſupreme happineſs, are as certain as the infinite goodneſs of God itſelf.

But, if Divine Juſtice is ſo formidable a branch of goodneſs, it is not leſs comfortable to be aſſured, that we can never be called to endure any ſuffering which is not diſpenſed by the paternal goodneſs of the Lord; *that our fruit will be unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life;* and that a time will come, when we ſhall bleſs and praiſe him for

for our chaſtiſements, as for the moſt real and ſalutary favors. Let us therefore conclude this long paragraph with the propoſition with which we entered upon it; *That the infinite juſtice of God far from oppoſing His Goodneſs, is in itſelf, a branch, formidable indeed, but nevertheleſs, an important and intereſting branch of Divine Goodneſs.*

I come next to conſider, *The infinite Authority of God, which, far from being contrary to, is intirely founded upon goodneſs.*

This authority conſiſts in the abſolute, and unlimited right which the Supreme Being has of diſpoſing of us, and of our actions. By the firſt of theſe rights, He can deal with us as He pleaſes; and by the ſecond, has an undoubted right to our obedience in whatever He commands. In virtue of this double right, which conſtitutes His ſupreme authority, *He is our ſovereign* Lord, *and our abſolute maſter.* Such is the infinite authority of God, than which it is not poſſible to conceive any greater.

To theſe two rights on the part of God, two obligations follow on ours. The firſt is our humble and entire acquieſcence in every thing He ſees fit to diſpenſe: and the ſecond, our faithful and willing obedience to all His commands; which obligation is as extenſive, and as unlimited, on our part, as the authority of God itſelf. In virtue of this obligation, we are His ſervants, His ſlaves; whoſe only lot muſt ever be, ſubmiſſion and obedience. Such is our entire dependance with reſpect to God in virtue of his authority, that, it is impoſſible to conceive a ſtronger obligation.

Let us now examine the foundation of this authority; for the Divine authority as it is real, muſt be eſtabliſhed on ſome good reaſon, as its inconteſtable proof and title. All authority deſtitute of ſuch foundation, is chimerical, and the unjuſt claim of uſurpation. Reaſon and ſcripture agree in making *the act of creation* the foundation of this divine prerogative. Reaſon tells us that to God belongs, and on his good-pleaſure muſt depend,

depend, every thing he has made; and that the Creator of the univerfe muft be its Lord. Scripture informs us *that the moft high God, is the poffeffor of heaven and earth; that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulnefs thereof;* and in Ezekiel, *behold, all fouls are mine.* Thus, in the hundredth Pfalm, the inhabitants of the earth are called upon to rejoice, *becaufe that the Lord has made them, and not they themfelves.* And laftly to fhew, that creation is the title of this authority: fcripture farther reprefents it under the image of a potter, who fafhions the clay according to his will. We find in Jeremiah a remarkable parable to this purpofe. God having fent the Prophet *to go down to the potter's houfe,* where *the veffel that he had made being marred in his hand, he made it again another veffel, as feemed good unto him;* upon which the Prophet was commanded to fpeak to the people, faying, *O houfe of Ifrael! cannot I do with you as this potter? Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, fo are ye in my hand, O houfe of Ifrael!* It is impoffible to exprefs, more ftrongly, the abfolute au-

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thority of our Maker, in confequence of our being *the work of his hands.*

Mankind are generally agreed on this fubject, yet they ftrangly pervert the truth, by oppofing this authority to infinite goodnefs. For in the divine authority they difcover reafon to juftify the infinite mifery of the reprobate; and maintain, that as the authority of God is infinite and unlimited, He has a right to inflict on them never-ending torments. And in order to filence every expoftulation, the words of St. Paul are applied to this fubject: *who art thou, O man! that replieft againft God? Shall the thing formed, fay to Him that formed it, why haft thou made me thus?* Thus does a truth ill-underftood, lead to the moft abfurd confequences!

It is therefore of the laft importance to fhew, that the barbarous right, attributed to the Almighty, of rendering His creatures infinitely wretched, is a right abfolutely impoffible in its very nature, and confequently,

we do not leſſen the divine authority, by excluding from it this pretended, this horrible right; as I hope to prove, upon farther examination.

If then the authority of God ariſes from the act of creation, let us conſider what there can be in this act that may ſerve as a juſt foundation of this infinite authority. In the act of creation I can diſtinguiſh but two things: the Almighty *power*, which formed us; and the *will*, which led Him to create us. The divine authority muſt be the reſult of one or the other of theſe. Now it is evident that power alone, conſidered in itſelf, can never be the foundation of Divine Authority. The idea of power and ſtrength, and that of authority and right, have no natural connection. A Being may have ſufficient ſtrength and power to ſubject me to his pleaſure, but this alone can never give him any right; if therefore he has any real authority over me, it muſt be derived from ſome other ſource, for power alone is the pretended right of an uſurper; ſimilar to

that of the beafts of the foreft. This is a propofition fo clear, that all demonftration would tend to obfcure it; no one will ever difpute it; I may therefore propofe it as an axiom, *that the reafon of fuperior ftrength is no reafon at all, or that power alone can confer no juft right of authority.*

It is therefore in the *will* we are to feek for the foundation of that fupreme authority which the Divine Being poffeffes over his creatures. Now that *will*, which from nothing caufed us to be, was the firft act of infinite goodnefs, and arofe from the pure principle of benevolence and love. It is that which has conftituted the Creator the tender Parent of all, and is the pledge of that happinefs, which iffuing from Him, muft, in the end, fill with felicity every intellectual nature. Ah! when I contemplate the Being of beings, under the interefting point of view, in which creation places Him; when I view Him as a faithful Creator, as an eternal and gracious Father, who gave me exiftence that he might give me happinefs: I am

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not at a lofs to difcern the foundation of His infinite authority; I fee that it is the right of rendering me happy in the way beft fuited to my nature, and by the means beft adapted to the end. I then perceive the ftrongeft and moft intimate obligation on my part, to fubmit blindly, and without referve, to this authority; becaufe, in my nature I find a conftant thirft after fupreme happinefs: I fee the folly and extravagance of ever complaining of the difpenfations, or laws of an infinitely wife Being: the prefumption in a weak and ignorant creature of deciding on the means by which its happinefs is to be procured. *Woe unto him that ftriveth with his Maker: let the potfherds ftrive with the potfherds of the earth. But fhall the clay fay to him that fafhioned it, what makeft thou? Or thy work; he hath no hands? Thus faith the Lord, the holy One of Ifrael; afk me of things to come concerning my fons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.*

Since then the infinite authority of God over His creatures, is His unlimited right of

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confering happineſs in His own way; let us never aſcribe to that prerogative, the right of rendering them forever miſerable. Whatever frail mortals may pretend, this right is abſolutely impoſſible in itſelf, becauſe revolting from nature. Creation, which is an act of goodneſs, could not confer it; for to create for the purpoſe of infinite miſery, would be an act ſo unjuſt, ſo cruel, and tyrannical, that we cannot conceive a being capable of it; it would be contrary to that very nature of which God himſelf is the Author; and in a word, is abſolutely impoſſible. It is not on any ſuch principle that our heavenly Father reaſons with us, concerning that authority founded on creation, ſince He alledges that very act, as the reaſon why *He will not contend forever, or be always wrath*, as I have already ſhewn in quoting that text.

From what has been ſaid therefore, we may diſcern the nature of that authority, which the Divine Being poſſeſſes over us as our Creator; a right, not properly the offspring of power, but of infinite and unmerited love.

By this act of paternal goodness, He has given us the pledge, the sure and certain pledge of its eternal exercise; directed by that wisdom, and attended by that power, which are alone capable of employing the means necessary for securing our perfection and felicity; and if our natural desire of happiness leads us to accept existence as a precious benefit, the same nature lays us under the strongest obligation to acknowledge this infinite authority, by receiving all its dispensations and laws, with the most cheerful and profound submission. *Since the infinite authority of our Creator, far from being contrary to infinite goodness, is entirely founded upon it.*

Our next consideration, relates *to the infinite Majesty of the Supreme Being, which far from being contrary to, is built upon goodness as its firm, and eternal foundation.*

When we consider the Divine Being *in Himself*, and independent of any will to His creatures; He presents Himself to our astonished

aſtoniſhed imagination, in the infinite grandeur of ſupreme *majeſty*. What then is this divine majeſty? *It is the ſplendor ariſing from the union of all the divine perfections, as the firſt; the intelligent and powerful cauſe of the univerſe.*

As the firſt cauſe of the univerſe, we behold in God the Being of beings, whoſe glorious attributes are all eternal, independent, immutable, infinite, and neceſſary, as is His nature and exiſtence. What grandeur! What majeſty is here!

As the intelligent, and powerful cauſe of the univerſe, we behold God as an eye, pervading, enlightening, penetrating the immenſity of ſpace, and the revolutions of time. We ſee an all-powerful arm, which nothing can reſiſt, and which holds all things under its direction. By theſe two perfections, which are infinite, we may conceive the *omnipreſence* of God, that immenſity *which fills heaven and earth.*

Such

Such is the infinite majeſty of God. How feeble is language! how defective every term by which we try to expreſs our thoughts on this ſublime ſubject! Our thoughts themſelves, our moſt elevated conceptions, alas! What are they on a ſubject ſo marvellous! which abſorbs and confounds every finite intelligence? *O Lord my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honor and majeſty! Who covereſt thyſelf with light as with a garment; who ſtretcheſt out the heavens like a curtain. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can ſhew forth all his praiſe? His greatneſs is unſearchable!*

When I contemplate the Divine Majeſty in itſelf, when I behold a neceſſarily exiſtent Being; a Being immutable and infinite, whoſe knowledge, power, and preſence are univerſal and unlimited: I am filled with a reſpect, a veneration, bordering on apprehenſion and terror, which leads me to exclaim with the Pſalmiſt; *What is man, O Lord! that thou art mindful of him; or the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him?* But

when to these ideas, I join those arising from infinite goodness; when I remember that the Being infinitely great, is as infinitely, and as necessarily good; my soul no longer terrified and appalled, considers the majesty of the Deity in its most interesting aspect; it beholds a Being necessary in all His attributes, consequently, infinite and immutable in goodness: an eye from which no darkness can hide, but a paternal eye, from which nothing, conducive to my happiness, can escape; and by whom the very hairs of my head are numbered: an all-powerful, but at the same time, a paternal arm, stretched out for my defence, and able to *perfect that which concerns me*, all that shall be necessary to secure my happiness. How delightful thus to unite the goodness of God to His majesty! From this union results the most perfect idea we can possibly form of the Divine Nature. *The majesty of God* is all that He is considered in Himself; and *the goodness of God*, all that He is, considered in relation to His creatures; and both are so intimately connected that whatever tends to

exalt

exalt the ſplendor of His adorable majeſty, does not leſs elevate our ideas of His ineffable goodneſs.

But notwithſtanding this intimate union of majeſty and goodneſs in God, human prejudices have been fertile in diſcovering means of placing them in oppoſition; for what cannot prejudice accompliſh? The neceſſity of finding in the Supreme Being ſomething to juſtify the infliction of never-ending torments on the wicked, has given riſe to this contradiction, and led to this abſurd reaſoning. *Every ſin*, will ſome ſay, *is committed againſt God, and conſequently againſt infinite Majeſty.* From this indiſputable truth they proceed to draw the following concluſion; *that all ſin, even in the moſt minute degree, deſerves infinite puniſhment, becauſe committed againſt infinite Majeſty.* I lament the neceſſity I am under ſeriouſly to refute ſo miſerable an argument. But weak as is this reaſoning, it is, nevertheleſs, held by many honeſt, upright, and in every other reſpect, intelligent, and cultivated minds.

What!

What! *All ſin deſerve infinite puniſhment,* becauſe committed againſt infinite Majeſty! Should we not, inſtead of refuting ſuch an argument, perceive at the firſt glance, that it refutes itſelf, and proves nothing, becauſe it proves infinitely too much? A being who merits infinite puniſhment, *is a being infinitely culpable;* a being infinitely culpable, *is a being infinitely wicked;* and a being infinitely wicked, *is a being infinite.* Thus is the ſinner, mortal man! a being ſo weak and finite, by the help of this argument, transformed into *an infinite being!* Thus we ſee the fallacy of an argument which leads to ſuch abſurd and irrational concluſions.

But I will go farther, and ſhew, *that no ſin whatever can deſerve infinite puniſhment.*

I admit that all ſin is committed againſt God, and conſequently againſt infinite majeſty. It is this which properly conſtitutes its great malignity. Sin, is a will in man, oppoſed to the will of God; and this character alone were ſufficient to diſcover to us its odious, its fatal,

fatal, its prefumptuous, and extravagant nature. It is this character of fin which fcripture has in view, when it reprefents *the carnal mind as enmity againft God;* and gives to finners the appellation of *enemies of God,* becaufe, a ftate of fin, is a ftate of rebellion againft our Maker.

But though all fin bears this odious character, and is committed againft infinite majefty; neverthelefs, there is, in all fin, an effential circumftance which renders the offender more or lefs criminal before God. This effential circumftance is *the degree of knowledge* which the finner has of God, and of his will; fo that *a man is rendered more or lefs culpable, in proportion to the greater, or lefs extent of his knowledge.* As this is a principle of common fenfe, which I believe no one contefts, I fhall not dwell upon it, or even refer my readers to the many paffages in fcripture which affert it, becaufe it is impoffible they fhould be ignorant of them; but proceed to fhew, that no fin whatever can deferve infinite punifhment, unlefs

unlefs we can fuppofe a thing impoffible, which is, that the finner is poffeffed of an infinite knowledge of God and of his will.

Befides, let us call to mind, whenever we fpeak of the fufferings inflicted by the Divine Being, that they can only be chaftifements for the finner; and that a chaftifement without end, is a contradiction in terms, and inconfiftent with the ideas we ought to form of the all-perfect nature of the Deity.

But, if fin cannot merit infinite punifhment, let us fee what that fuffering is which it does deferve. The principle which I have juft been recalling to the recollection of my reader, will enable him to difcern, that if divine punifhments are chaftifements, every fin will deferve fufferings as great, and as durable, as are requifite for the deftruction of fin, and the converfion of the finner.

It is therefore certain there can be nothing in the infinite majefty of God, which can ever ftop the courfe of His infinite good-

nefs.

neſs. The majeſty of God is the union of all thoſe glorious attributes which ſhine forth in Him as the firſt, the intelligent, and powerful cauſe of the univerſe. Thus the majeſty of God conſiſts in His neceſſary, His independent, His eternal, and immutable exiſtence; in His goodneſs, His wiſdom, and His infinite power. Such are the glorious attributes which conſtitute ſupreme majeſty and grandeur, and which render the Being who is poſſeſſed of them perfectly ſufficient and independent, having nothing either to hope or fear, from any outward cauſe. To ſuch a Being therefore, and to ſuch alone, can abſolutely, and excluſively belong a perfect *diſintereſtedneſs* in all He does; He alone can poſſeſs, in the ſupreme degree, what among men is called *generoſity*, and *magnanimity*, the moſt ſublime, the moſt glorious qualities by which an intelligent creature can ever reſemble the Creator. It belongs to God alone to be *great in goodneſs*, and to act always, and in every caſe, from pure love to His creatures; for who, but ſuch a Being,

is poffeffed of knowledge capable of difcerning, and power to execute all that can conftitute the happinefs of His creatures? In a word, He cannot be a Being of infinite majefty, unlefs He is a Being of infinite goodnefs. Refentment, hatred, vengeance, and cruelty, were ever the wretched offfpring of little minds, of weak and cowardly fouls; of thofe depraved and corrupted beings who are the fhameful fport of their bafe and unruly paffions. True magnanimity, fuch as belongs to Him who is *truly great*, knows none of thofe degrading and animal emotions, and never experiences any but the noble and generous fentiments of clemency, of love, and of beneficence. How far are we, alas! from honoring the Deity, when, under pretence of vindicating the rights of His offended majefty, we attribute to Him fentiments that would difgrace a frail mortal! To honor God in a manner becoming His perfections, let us acknowledge with joy, this precious and interefting truth; *that he is infinitely good, and in confequence of that, infinitely great.*

When

When therefore, in the preceding chapter, I undertook to eſtabliſh the infinite goodneſs of the Supreme Being, I began, by ſeparately proving thoſe perfections which conſtitute His ſupreme majeſty, from whence I deduced His infinite goodneſs.

We may therefore conclude this paragraph, by aſſerting, that the infinite majeſty of God reſts upon His goodneſs, as upon a firm and unſhaken foundation, becauſe, all the attributes which compoſe the divine majeſty, are eternal and immutable. As long, therefore, as the Deity ſhall be neceſſarily exiſtent, independent, eternal and immutable; as long as He ſhall continue infinitely wiſe and powerful, ſo long will He remain infinitely good: and thus, *the infinite majeſty of God, far from being contrary to, is built upon goodneſs, as its firm and eternal foundation.*

The glory of God, inſtead of requiring any thing contrary to his infinite goodneſs, is highly intereſted in its eternal exerciſe.

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The Divine glory is not any ſingle attribute of the Supreme Being, but that reſplendent luſtre which ariſes from the union of all His adorable perfections; and may be defined the ſtriking maniſeſtation which the Deity *vouchſafes to make of Himſelf and of his perfections, to His creatures, in nature and revelation.* All the works of God, whether reſpecting the creation and government of the univerſe, or the redemption and ſalvation of the human race, bear the marks of His glorious attributes, and are ſtamped with the character of His adorable perfections: For in nature, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth forth His handy work: the whole earth is full of his glory.* In the great work of redeeming love ſcripture informs us, *That the Son of God, the author and finiſher of our faith, was the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon:* the goſpel, *the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt;* and the redemption he came to accompliſh, is repreſented in the epiſtle to the Epheſians, *as being to the praiſe and glory of his grace.*

Thus

Thus what one prophet calls *the knowledge of the Lord*, another calls *the knowledge of the glory of the Lord;* becauſe it is in the knowledge of God that His glory conſiſts, agreeable to the definition I have given.

If then the glory of God, is the reſplendent and univerſal manifeſtation of all His perfections; all that *glory* requires, is that the Divine Being ſhould be known to His intelligent creatures as He is; and therefore it can never require any thing contrary to His infinite goodneſs. Nevertheleſs, by a ſtrange perverſion of ideas, means have been found of oppoſing the glory of God to his goodneſs, and this from the neceſſity of aſſigning a reaſon for the infinite miſery of the reprobate. Whoever admits eternal torments, cannot poſſibly attribute to His Maker a deſign of ſaving the whole human race; but as a Being ſupremely wiſe muſt propoſe to himſelf ſome end in all He does, ſo has the glory of God been ſelected as the end and purpoſe of all His actions. What a ſoleciſm is here! for in ſeparating the glory of God

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from the happineſs of His creatures, it becomes impoſſible to prove, that all He does is with a view to His glory. This however, when rightly underſtood, is a principle I am far from rejecting, but conſider as a ſublime and ſacred truth; as I ſhall evince hereafter. But this principle, when in the hands of thoſe of whom I am ſpeaking, becomes a convenient mode of plauſibly accounting for the infinite miſery of the reprobate. The Divine Being, will ſuch argue, does all things for His glory, that is, to manifeſt His perfections in a ſtriking manner. Thus, at the great day of univerſal judgment, the goodneſs and juſtice of God will be diſplayed in His paternal love to the righteous, and His tremendous juſtice to the wicked. Thus far we agree to the truth of this propoſition. But they proceed to diſguiſe the nature of divine juſtice, by ſuppoſing it to conſiſt in ſuch ſeverity as can only belong to vengeance and cruelty. They conclude that as the infinite goodneſs of God will be manifeſted in the eternal ſalvation of the elect; ſo will His juſtice be diſplayed in the endleſs

miſery

mifery of the reprobate: and that as the divine glory requires the manifeftation of His infinite juftice, it requires the infinite mifery of the wicked.

Let us ftop to behold the fatal influence of one error, how it corrupts and perverts the fublimeft truths. The example before us is ftriking. All the propofitions here laid down are fo many facred and folemn truths. But whither do they lead? Alas! when contaminated by the admiffion of one fatal error, they conduct thofe of whom I am fpeaking, to the moft horrid conclufion which can poffibly be drawn; *That the honor and glory of a Being infinitely good, requires Him to fhew Himfelf, in effect, infinitely cruel and implacable!* How ftrange, O my God! how inconceivably ftrange, to make thy glory confift in what muft moft dishonour thy great name!

In afferting this do we affirm that truth leads to error? No, truth in its purity can

never conduct to falsehood; since every consequence which flows from a true principle, is as evidently true as the principle which gave rise to it. But the introduction of a single error, of one false idea, is sufficient to infect and pervert a long chain of truths; each of which, by being allied and incorporated with it, partakes of its falsehood, in as much as it conveys ideas opposite to truth: and thus it is in the case before us. The mind, accustomed to attribute to the Divine Being the infliction of endless torments on creatures who exist only by his irresistible will, seeks in Him some perfection whereby to lessen the horror of an idea as much opposed to divine goodness, as darkness to light. To this erroneous idea they give the awful and sacred name of *Justice*, place it among the divine attributes, and never fail to present it under this false appearance, so that the propositions just stated, tho' true in themselves, become affected by the association, and lead to this terrible conclusion, *that the Glory of God requires the infinite misery of the reprobate.*

To change the face of things we need therefore only refute this erroneous idea of divine juftice, which I have laboured to effect in the preceding paragraph; and I hope not without fuccefs. To that definition I refer my reader, and to the confequences which flow from it, which we will now apply to our fubject. If juftice is a branch of divine goodnefs; and rigour, merciful feverity, with a view to the correction and amendment of the fufferer; it is evident that the glory of God, though it requires the punifhnent of the wicked at the great day, requires nothing contrary to infinite goodnefs; as the exercife of that fevere juftice is at the fame time a manifeftation of His goodnefs.

It would be treating this interefting fubject too flightly were I to ftop here: I muft go yet farther and demonftrate, *that the glory of God is fovereignly interefted in the eternal exercife of His infinite goodnefs.* Three confiderations offer themfelves in fupport of this truth; and I flatter myfelf my readers will

will not think the discussion they require, tedious.

The first consideration results from the definition of divine glory. For if this consists in the illustrious manifestation which the Supreme Being makes of all His admirable perfections, it is necessary to that glory, that He should be known as He really is. Now, God is love, pure disinterested benevolence. To know Him therefore as He is, we must contemplate Him in the character of infinite goodness, and in nothing derogatory to it. The glory of the divine nature requires therefore, the display of an unchangeable, inexhaustible, universal, and eternal goodness to all His creatures. It is thus that the glory of God shines forth in the works of nature, where *He leaves not Himself without a witness in that He does good; giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness.* But if we read this truth inscribed on the works of nature, in what lively characters does it stand expressed in the volume

volume of His grace! where the Father of mercies *ſpares not His own Son, but delivers Him up to death* for us, together with the moſt ſolemn aſſurance, *that He will with Him freely give us all things.*

But it may be aſked, does not the glory of God require the manifeſtation of His other perfections? Certainly, as it reſults from their union. But in the exerciſe of divine goodneſs, do we not ſee infinite wiſdom directing, infinite power executing; do we not ſee divine goodneſs, under the name of holineſs, promulgating the moſt perfect laws for our improvement and happineſs; and does it not aſſume the formidable appellation of juſtice, that by chaſtiſements it may accompliſh the deſtruction of ſin, that enemy of our peace, and enduce us to a cordial and habitual obedience to all the divine commands? And O! what heart can conceive! What tongue can expreſs the praiſes due to ſuch exalted glory! when all theſe adorable perfections ſhall be fully manifeſted to every creature; ſin con-

quered,

quered, and ſinners become holy, perfect, and happy! Their hearts, penetrated with love and gratitude, will forever adore the Author of their exiſtence and felicity, before whoſe throne will eternally aſcend the grateful homage of their thankſgiving and praiſe, which ſhall reſound through the manſions of celeſtial glory forever and ever.

The ſecond conſideration, by which I mean to ſhew, that the divine glory is intereſted in the eternal exerciſe of infinite goodneſs, is, that His glory is inſeparable from the happineſs of every intelligent being. If the perfect glory of God ariſes from the perfect knowledge of His perfections, this knowledge muſt become univerſal to every creature, in order to the complete manifeſtation of His glory. Now it is impoſſible that beings ſhould arrive at the knowledge of God, without, in ſome meaſure, reſembling Him. To know God as He is, is to behold Him as infinitely amiable; and to view Him as infinitely amiable, is to love Him with our whole heart; and is not this

to

to be good, perfect, and happy, and to be imitators of Him? St. John ſpeaks the ſame language when he ſays, *we ſhall be like Him, for we ſhall ſee Him as He is.* It is therefore, as certain that all men will, ſooner or later, arrive at perfection and happineſs, as it is certain that the Divine Being will render His knowledge and glory univerſal. And what heart is not tranſported with the moſt perfect joy, in the view of a futurity ſo intereſting and certain; of a futurity which ſhall unite the perfect glory of God, and the complete felicity of every creature. And can we ever doubt, that when the Supreme Being is employed in the advancement of His glory; He will not at the ſame time, by His infinite goodneſs, *work in us to will and to do of His good pleaſure?*

The third, and laſt conſideration, on this ſubject is, *that the glory of the Creator depends upon the perfection of His creatures;* as the honor of the Worker ariſes from the perfection of his work. Can any thing, on this principle, be more contrary to the glo-

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ry of God, than the infinite miſery of the reprobate? A multitude of intelligent and immortal beings, whoſe nature and ſtate will be in eternal contradiction the one, to the other. For with natures capable of happineſs, and deſires ardently directed towards it; their eternal portion muſt be the moſt horrid and unremitting agony. Deſcription falls infinitely ſhort of the terrible idea; but reaſon tells us, were we free from prejudice, that it can never advance the glory of the Creator.

If, as ſome pretend, the reprobate remain forever in a hardened and obdurate ſtate, what do we behold? But a race of beings forever devoted to crimes and ſufferings, on whom Almighty Power confers eternal exiſtence, well knowing it will be employed in perpetuating ſin and miſery! If we are to frame our ideas of the Worker from His works, how formidable muſt thoſe be, which are received from the repreſentation of a multitude of wicked and unhappy beings, plunged forever in all the horrors

horrors of ſin, of blaſphemy, of agony, rage, and deſpair?

If we admit with others, that the reprobate are capable of ſincere repentance, but that it will be unavailing, becauſe the final and irrevocable ſentence is pronounced againſt them: This ſuppoſition relieves us at leaſt from one contradiction which the former contained; for thus at leaſt, ſin will not laſt forever, and intelligent creatures will not be eternally wicked in defiance of a nature which came perfect from the hands of the Creator. But if it obviates one difficulty, it raiſes another from which the former was exempt; which is, that thoſe beings penitent and converted, will then forever aſpire at an approach to God as their ſovereign good; will forever implore his mercy and forgiveneſs; while God on His part, though the Father of mercies, will eternally repulſe and reject them, and refuſe *to be exalted, by having mercy upon them;* but leave them a prey to the moſt cruel ſufferings. And here again were we, as we are commanded

commanded in ſcripture, to judge of the Worker by His work, to what concluſions ſhould we not be led? What ideas ſhould we form of the parent of a numerous family, who would turn from the ſupplications of his penitent children; and who, poſſeſſing the ample means of rendering them perfectly and laſtingly happy, ſhould be forever deaf to their intreaties, and inflict upon them unterminating miſery?

Which ever way therefore we behold the reprobate in eternal miſery; whether as obſtinate ſinners, or as penitent offenders, we cannot help diſcovering their ſtate to be in contradiction to the infinite goodneſs of the divine nature, and conſequently abſolutely impoſſible.

The painful object we have been contemplating, requires us to turn our thoughts once more back upon the delightful contraſt of Goodneſs Infinite, which will leave no being in the univerſe a final prey to wickedneſs and miſery, but will accompliſh His

work,

work, by enlightening their underſtanding, rectifying their will, rooting out every vicious habit, deſtroying every evil propenſity; and to effect this, employing every mean of gentleneſs and ſeverity, that His wiſdom ſhall ſee neceſſary; till He has at length baniſhed evil from the univerſe, and rendered all its intelligent inhabitants good and happy. What a proſpect! But ſublime and delightful as it is, it cannot be exagerated, becauſe, it is our Creator, the beſt, as well as greateſt of beings, our eternal Father, who is to complete the aſtoniſhing work: He who commands us *to love Him with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our ſtrength, and with all our mind;* becauſe He is worthy of this abſolute love and confidence. How happy is the univerſe to be ſubject to His government! What gladneſs ſhould we feel! What ſongs of triumph ſhould we raiſe! *How ſhould the earth rejoice, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!* And that under His ſway we may reſt aſſured, that no moral evil will ever exiſt, which ſhall not be deſtroyed, nor any phy-

fical evil which is not intended as a remedy, whereby moral agents may attain to perfection and felicity; to the immortal glory of the Being infinitely good.

Let us then, with the delightful sentiment arifing from perfect conviction, draw this conclufion from all that has been faid; *That the Glory of God, far from requiring any thing contrary to His infinite goodnefs, is, in the higheft degree, interefted in its eternal exercife.*

Having thus completed the examination of thofe feveral perfections in the Divine Nature, which have been oppofed to infinite goodnefs; I hope it will appear with perfect evidence, that neither the liberty, the holinefs, or the juftice of the Divine Being; neither His authority, His majefty, or His glory, can in any inftance whatever, contradict, or oppofe His infinite and adorable goodnefs, of which thefe feveral perfections may be faid to be branches; and from their ftrict and intimate connection, to throw new light

upon

upon the principal ſubject of this work. But as the above diſcuſſion has been long, it will require the following recapitulation.

The infinite Liberty of God, ſecures to His creatures the perfect and eternal exerciſe of His infinite goodneſs; becauſe this liberty conſiſts in an abſolute exemption from all reſtraint, and a freedom to execute every deſign and purpoſe of His goodneſs, without impediment.

The infinite holineſs of the Divine Nature is a capital and delightful branch of infinite goodneſs; it is that *will* of the Supreme Being which requires the moral perfection of ſinners, becauſe abſolutely neceſſary to their happineſs; and which hates ſin with a perfect hatred, as the obſtacle of their felicity, becauſe His love to the ſinner is infinite.

The infinite juſtice of God is another, and a formidable branch of infinite goodneſs; ſince from it we are aſſured of the conſtant diſpenſation of whatever is beſt adapted to our

moral ſtate, and conſequently, that we ſhall not eſcape the infliction of ſuch ſufferings as His wiſdom ſhall ſee neceſſary for our converſion, and ſalvation, however dreadful in degree, or laſting in duration.

The infinite authority of God is entirely founded on His infinite goodneſs; for it is the abſolute and unlimited right which the Deity poſſeſſes as Creator, of governing His creatures, and leading them to happineſs by ſuch means as He ſees moſt proper and efficacious.

The majeſty of God is the firm and unſhaken foundation of His infinite goodneſs; for the ſupreme majeſty of the Moſt High, ſpeaks Him a Being abſolutely ſelf-ſufficient, totally diſintereſted in all his actions, and conſequently incapable of any other motive than the happineſs of His creatures. This majeſty alſo conſiſts in the various perfections of the Divine nature, and as all thoſe glorious attributes are immutable and eternal;

nal; the Divine Majeſty muſt ever remain the foundation of infinite goodneſs.

And laſtly, *the glory of the Supreme Being is ſovereignly intereſted in the eternal exerciſe of His infinite goodneſs;* for in order to the true manifeſtation of this glory, the goodneſs of God muſt appear, what it really is, infinite; or in other words, unchangeable, inexhauſtible, univerſal, and eternal; which neceſſarily leads to the diſplay of the divine wiſdom and power, of holineſs and juſtice; and renders the perfect glory of God inſeparable from His knowledge, and from the perfection and happineſs of His creatures; as the glory of the worker ariſes from the perfection of his work.

Such is the ſubſtance of all that has been advanced on each of theſe heads; the reſult of which is, *that all the ſublime perfections of God as they exiſt in Him, and in the manner they are diſplayed to His creatures; far from containing any contradiction or oppoſition to each other, are in a conſtant and*

 beautiful

beautiful harmony; and admirably conſpire jointly to ſpread perfection and happineſs, throughout the univerſe; confirming the ſecond conſequence ariſing from infinite goodneſs, *that it is abſolutely impoſſible any thing ſhould be found in God contrary thereto.*

As the earneſtneſs with which I have been endeavouring to eſtabliſh this important truth has led me to preſent it in every point of view which could tend to its elucidation, diſengage it from the fatal miſts of errors, and raiſe it victorious and triumphant from the chaos of prejudice and miſapprehenſion; I fear I may have been led into repetitions unneceſſary to the candid, but not void of uſe to ſuch as have been long prejudiced in favor of contrary opinions.

Let us now proceed to our third conſequence, *Every act of the Divine Being is an act of infinite goodneſs.*

A few words will be ſufficient to evince the truth of this propoſition. Every act of the

the Divine Being is an act of His will: now as His will is infinitely and perfectly good, every act of his will must be an act of His goodness; as I have already shewn, at large, from reason and scripture, in explaining those words of St. John, *God is Love;* where the apostle gives us the most admirable definition possible of the Divine will; for the seat of love and benevolence resides not in the understanding, but in the will. In treating this subject therefore, I proved, *that the eternal, immutable essence of the Divine will, was love for His creatures; the will of rendering them happy; He has no other will but this, none different, none contrary;* in a word, *His will is love and goodness;* for, *God is love,* which gives rise to the third consequence, *that every act of God is an act of His infinite goodness.*

As this proposition is important, I must neglect nothing to make it, if possible, yet more evident; to place it in the strongest light I will compare the will of an intelligent creature with the will of the Creator. A

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created intelligence, however perfect his nature, and elevated his rank in the ſcale of being, is nevertheleſs, a finite being, and thence, capable of advancement in knowledge, in exellence, in perfection, and happineſs. The goodneſs therefore of ſuch a being, great as it may be, is nevertheleſs limited; for wanting ſelf-ſufficiency, He cannot be perfectly diſintereſted. Two different motives will, by turns, overule the determinations of his will; his own advantage, or that of others; and whenever theſe ſhall be found in oppoſition, it is natural that the balance of his will ſhould preponderate in favor of his own intereſt. Nay, more; whenever ſuch a being is called upon generouſly to forego his own immediate advantage, he needs the encouraging promiſe of a future glorious reward to animate him to the noble ſacrifice. So true is it, that created beings are, in ſome degree, indigent, and can never entirely diveſt themſelves of a deſire to promote their ſelf-happineſs.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI ... ORE

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But it cannot be thus with God; a Being perfectly independent, immutable, infinite; can never, in any ſingle inſtance, be determined by motives of ſelf-advantage, becauſe, it would imply a contradiction to His nature to ſuppoſe ſuch a Being had any thing to acquire. The motive, the only motive, by which the Divine will can be influenced, is the happineſs of His creatures: He alone poſſeſſes ſuch ſupreme goodneſs; and therefore it was, that our Saviour declared, *there is none good but one, that is God.*

But in order to confirm the truth of our third conſequence, *that every act of the Divine Being, is an act of His goodneſs;* let us have recourſe to the authority of ſcripture, where we are told that *the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. That He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all his works.* And when St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Romans, ſpeaks of *the perfect will of God,* we are undoubtedly to underſtand, that all His acts are acts of goodneſs.

goodnefs. It is alfo worthy of particular notice, that the fame apoftle, writing to the Ephefians, concerning the falvation declared by Jefus Chrift, calls it *the good pleafure of* the divine *will;* and in his epiftle to the Theffalonians the fame is expreffed, as, *the good pleafure of His goodnefs,* fubftituting the word *goodnefs* for *will,* becaufe in effect, they are one and the fame thing.

And now, that I have eftablifhed this truth from reafon and fcripture, let us fee the rich treafure it contains.

And let us firft confider the propofition before us, i. e. *every act of the Divine Being.* If we confider His acts with refpect to *time,* the propofition contains, actions paft, prefent, and future; if with refpect to place, it relates, not only to this earth and its inhabitants, but comprehends thofe innumerable worlds that fill the immenfity of fpace, and all the beings that ever have, or ever will inhabit them: fuch is the extent of our third

confequence

confequence, it comprehends *every act of the Divine will, whether in time or in fpace.*

But let us advance a ftep farther, and fee what thofe actions are of which God is the fource. And here I fhall perhaps furprife certain of my readers by afferting, that God is the Author of every action; all that is done throughout the univerfe, if not the immediate act of the Deity, is the immediate act of creatures animate, or inanimate, who compofe the univerfe. Now thefe creatures being the work of God, abfolutely depend on the power of their Creator for their exiftence and action; *for in him they live, move, and have their being; neither could they*, as our Saviour declared to Pilate, *have any power, except it were given them from above.* Thus *every action of the creature is at the fame time an action of the Creator.* Creatures are the fecond caufes, the Creator is the Firft Caufe of all. Second caufes are inftruments in the hands of the Firft, by which He accomplifhes His eternal purpofes; therefore every thing ultimately proceeds from the Firft Caufe: for *who is he that*

that ſaith, and it cometh to paſs, when the Lord commanded it not? Out of the mouth of the Moſt High proceedeth not evil and good? I form the light, and create darkneſs; I make peace and create evil: I, the Lord, do all theſe things.

But among the actions of ſecond cauſes are found a multitude of ſins and crimes, and can theſe be refered to the action of the Firſt Cauſe, without making God the author of ſin? The difficulty ariſing from this objection will diſappear if we attend to what has been ſaid relative to the immediate actions of ſecond cauſes, *that they are at the ſame time, the actions of the creature, and of the Creator.* Thoſe actions in the creature, which are evil, are no farther ſinful than as they partake of a corrupt will, and are oppoſed to the law of God: *for ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the law.* But in as much as theſe actions belong to the Firſt Cauſe, they muſt proceed from a will the moſt excellent, and diſpenſations the moſt ſalutary: ſecond cauſes become culpable before God by the wick-

ed intentions which inftigate their actions; while at the fame time, they are the ignoant and undefigning inftruments, by which the Firft Caufe executes the purpofes of His eternal counfels.

But we will have recourfe to fome examples to fhew the juftice and truth of this diftinction. The death of the Son of God is allowed by all, who call themfelves chriftians, to be the moft atrocious crime, the moft horrible act, that the malice and wickednefs of fecond caufes could ever invent; and yet this action, as far as it belongs to the Firft Caufe, is the greateft of bleffings, the utmoft difplay of benignity and love. *When the kings of the earth ftood up, and the rulers were gathered together*, it was *againft the Lord and againft his Chrift*; but this oppofition to the will of God, which was their fin, was in His hand the means of effecting *whatfoever His counfel had determined before to be done.*

We have another ftriking example in the hiftory of Jofeph; inafmuch as the cruel treatment

treatment he experienced was the action of his unnatural brothers, animated by hatred and envy, it was a crime of a black and deteſtable nature; but view it as it relates to the Firſt Cauſe, and it will appear, not only as the road to his elevation and proſperity, but as the ſalutary mean of preſervation to a numerous and flouriſhing nation. This is the language of Joſeph himſelf, who reaſoning with his brethren, ſays, *as for you, ye thought evil againſt me, but God meant it unto good*; remarkable words theſe, by which we are authorized to affirm, that whatever the ſinner intends as evil, the Divine Ruler of events *means unto good.*

The parable of the prodigal ſon offers us a third inſtance in confirmation of this truth. His demand of the portion that belonged to him, was the action of a libertine deſirous to ſhake off the reſtraints of parental authority, and to give looſe to every unruly paſſion; but the grant of his requeſt by his father, was the excellent and ſalutary means of producing indigence and miſery, and in conſequence

consequence of these afflictions, conversion and amendment. Now we should do well to consider, that in this parable our Saviour represents the Supreme Being under the image of the father.

Thus we see the Deity presiding over the universe, governing and directing every action in time and in space; so that there is not an individual among intelligent beings who is not authorised to say; *all that has ever befallen me, from the first moment of my existence to the present, is the work of God; nor can any event that may concern me hereafter, in time or in eternity, ever take place, without the concurrence of the First Cause.* Ah! since it is our happiness to be in possession of so delightful, so comforting a truth, let us never more confine our views with servile stupidity to second causes. In all that befalls us, whether good or evil, let us elevate our thoughts to the great First Cause; let us acquire this delightful habit, that whatever the changes of this passing scene may be, we may be ever ready to say with the acquiescence

cence of true devotion; I will be dumb, and open not my mouth, becaufe thou, O Lord, doeft it.

If then, *every event in time, and fpace, is the act of the Firft Caufe, either directly or indirectly, by the medium of the creature; we know that infinite goodnefs produces and overules every event*, and therefore, *that whatever befalls every creature in any period of time, or in any part of that immenfe fpace which compofe the univerfe, is, with refpect to each of them, the greateft poffible good.* And is not this the moft delightful, the moft fublime, the moft interefting truth that can engage the attention, or animate the hopes of a creature? a truth as certain and neceffary as the infinite goodnefs of God. How it brightens the face of nature! and decks the fplendors of the univerfe, in the fmiles of benignity! This delightful truth, as it relates not only to ourfelves, but embraces every created intelligence, muft fill all who are fo happy as to poffefs it, with the moft lively fentiments of confidence and joy. How

How happy am I to be aſſured, *that every event that has befallen me, from the firſt moment of my exiſtence to the preſent, as well as whatever will befall me throughout all eternity, is the greateſt poſſible good that the infinite bounty of my Creator can beſtow.*

Such is the aſſurance, ſuch the conſequence ariſing from the knowledge of the infinite goodneſs of God. How much more truly valuable than any of thoſe things which ignorance and folly ſeek with ardor, and of which vanity and preſumption make their boaſt! For thus ſaith the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah; *let him that glorieth glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord which exerciſe loving kindneſs, judgment and righteouſneſs in the earth; for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord.* May we not, henceforth *rejoice evermore, and in every thing give thanks.* Never let us be caſt down by any events, even thoſe which wear the moſt diſcouraging aſpect; never *let us judge according to appearance;* but rather, by this great principle of which we are ſure,

that infinite goodneſs, enlightened by infinite wiſdom, and ſeconded by infinite power, diſpenſes every event; and ſay with Job, *though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him.*

Let us not quit this intereſting truth, till we have attended to two conſequences, which are calculated to demonſtrate its infinite importance.

And firſt, let us obſerve to how ſublime and glorious a height this knowledge of God raiſes human nature, by comparing the ſtate of a man deſtitute of this knowledge, with the ſtate of him who poſſeſſes it. I mean to repreſent theſe oppoſite conditions in my own perſon, which every one may apply to himſelf with equal truth and propriety.

Deſtitute of the knowledge of God, what am I, but ignorance and blindneſs, encompaſſed on every ſide with thick darkneſs? Not only incapable of foreſeeing future events, unable *to boaſt myſelf of the morrow, not knowing what a day may bring forth,* but

ignorant of the judgment I ought to form of events when they have actually taken place. I know not when to rejoice, or when to be afflicted; becaufe I cannot diftinguifh with certainty the good, or the evil. I rejoice to day at what yefterday afflicted me; and what now tranfports me with delight, may on the morrow fill me with affliction and diftrefs. A hundred times have I been guilty of thefe mortifying miftakes; and were I not bleff-ed with the knowledge of God, I fhould thus continue the deplorable and wretched fport of fortuitous events.

But no fooner am I inftructed in the knowledge of God; no fooner do I behold the Firft Caufe of all, as a being poffeffed of infinite goodnefs, but darknefs and chance exift no more for me; light furrounds my path, and tranquillity inhabits my breaft. It is true that I do not perceive any more than before, how every event is calculated to produce the greateft good; becaufe, fuch knowledge can alone belong to the Being who diftinctly views the immenfe chain of

caufes and effects; but I am not lefs perfuaded that every event is the greateft poffible benefit, becaufe overruled by infinite Goodnefs.

May I not fay that in this treafure I poffefs *the pearl of great price;* and ought I not henceforth to efteem it as my riches, my joy, my confolation, and my happinefs? I will no more *take thought for the morrow;* for the morrow did I fay; no, not for the events of eternity. *None of thefe things* fhall *move me*, but I will *caft all my care upon Him who careth for me*, and is the difpenfer of every event. And let what will befall me, I will raife my thoughts to the great Firft Caufe, and be ready to fay: O Supreme and adorable Goodnefs, *Thou didft it;* it is Thy choice, and can therefore be no other than my greateft good! Thus, whatever may be the prefent appearance of fecond caufes, they will never be any other, in my fight, than inftruments in the hand of Infinite Goodnefs; and I will courageoufly defy all the powers of nature; every creature in

heaven and in earth, in time or in eternity, to be able to ſeparate me from the divine Love.

To me the glorious effects of the divine knowledge are ſuch, as intirely to overcome my own ignorance and weakneſs, and extend my knowledge and power far beyond their natural bounds. I know not what is neceſſary to my happineſs, but the infinite goodneſs of the Firſt Cauſe knows it for me. I am, it is true, incapable of procuring the means eſſential to my felicity; but I know, that the power of the Firſt Cauſe is able to effect every thing which He ſees ſuitable to my moral ſtate, and conducive to my real happineſs. When I conſider the glorious, the delightful conſequences which attend this knowledge of God, I feel the force of the eulogy contained in the ninth chapter of the propheſy of Jeremiah: *Thus ſaith the Lord, let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that*

 he

he underſtandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving kindneſs, judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth: for in theſe things do I delight, ſaith the Lord.

I am now come to the ſecond conſideration reſulting from the third conſequence; and this is, that the ſcheme which divine wiſdom has conceived for the government of moral agents, is the plan of infinite goodneſs. This goodneſs has aſſigned to man his final deſtination, and from the creation of the world to the preſent moment, is continually employed in the execution of this perfect plan; which it will never neglect, never abandon, in time or in eternity; but fully accompliſh, to the praiſe and glory of the Divine name. And could I ever have employed to better purpoſe, the time and talents Thou haſt beſtowed upon me, O my God! than in attempting to develope this adorable plan of thine infinite goodneſs, according to the light Thou haſt vouchſafed me in nature and revelation. I

will not be difcouraged by the fublimity of the fubject, though I know that I muft fink infinitely below its majefty; for who can attain to the height of the divine counfels? Were I the moft enlightened, the moft eloquent among mortals; were I even to fpeak the language of angels; or, could I boaft the nature of thefe celeftial meffengers, I fhould be confounded, and abforbed in the immenfe abyfs.

Having demonftrated the truth, and unfolded the meaning of our third confequence, it is time that I fhould apply it to all thofe dreadful evils which we fee in the world; and to the more terrible calamities which divine juftice will inflict upon the wicked in a future ftate. What are we to think of thefe evils? What judgment are we to form concerning their exiftence? Affifted by the light of our propofition, I affirm with confidence; *that under the government, and providence of an infinitely good Being, all is conftantly right, and that there does not, or ever will exift, any real evil in the univerfe.*

 However

However, when I aſſert that there exiſts no *real* evil, I am ſenſible it requires an explanation; which will be ſhort and eaſy. *Evil*, conſidered *in itſelf*, is real, alas! but too real in this connected view. The various and dreadful crimes which compoſe the black catalogue of vice; the acuteneſs of pain, the horrors of indigence, the anguiſh of diſſolution, are, no doubt, real evils, heavy calamities; to maintain the contrary, would be to the laſt degree abſurd. But if we view each of theſe in their conſequences and effects, we ſhall ſee that they are not real evils; becauſe, the infinite goodneſs of God, who can derive good from evil, knows how to make them conſpire to eternal happineſs, to infinite good; ſo that the evils through which we muſt inevitably paſs, being the neceſſary means of happineſs, cannot be eſteemed other than real good. Do we know that we are the creatures of God, whoſe deſtination is for immortality and happineſs; and that in order to fit us for their enjoyment, has placed us on this earth for a very little time, where *our days are as*

an hand's breadth, and our age as nothing before that eternity which awaits us; we know this, and neverthelefs derogating from the grandeur of our hopes, and confining our views to the prefent world; we confider the evils which affault us on every fide, as they are in themfelves, without extending our views farther. Should they by this means appear bitter and terrible calamities; fhould they leave us without confolation, deftitute of courage, or ftrength to fupport them; how can we complain when we have given them their fting? In order to form a proper judgment of the evils of life, let us confider them as connected with their effects, and we fhall agree to the propofition already laid down, as to a certain truth; that *under the government and providence of a Being infinitely good, every thing will be ultimately right, and that there neither is, or ever can be, any real evil in the univerfe.* But let us analize this truth by applying it to moral and phyfical evil; the former of which comprehends every fpecies of fin, and the latter every kind of fuffering.

Let

Let us begin by an inquiry into moral evil. Moral evil, or ſin, conſidered in its own nature, is a great and terrible evil, becauſe abſolutely oppoſed to our happineſs. Sin is, in its nature, that will of the creature, which is contrary to the will of his Creator. Now every act of the divine will, being an act of infinite goodneſs, deſigned to conduct us to happineſs; every will in man which is oppoſed to the will of God, muſt neceſſarily conduct to evil and miſery; nor can the omnipotence of God himſelf, render a creature happy till this perverſe and evil will is ſubdued. Such is the odious and horrible nature of ſin, it places man in a ſtate contrary to his nature, inaſmuch as the deſire of happineſs is, as it were, a natural inſtinct, and the attainment of miſery the inevitable conſequence of ſin. This ſeducer of our ſouls, leads us to reject the felicity offered us by our Creator; and to ſeek it where it is impoſſible ever to be found. And is not this *a war*, a cruel war *to our ſouls?* Nay, more: ſin, as long as he maintains his dominion, is an implacable

enemy;

enemy; increafing, and continually aggravating the evil he does; fortifying our inordinate defires, and rendering their tyranny more and more imperious, by the force of habit. He inures us to his yoke till he makes us *drink iniquity like water.* Ah! might I ever hope that my expoftulations would reach any of thofe unhappy votaries whom he leads captive at his will; I fhould tell them, from the love I bear to their immortal fouls, that the accufations I have brought againft fin, are not ended here, but that there yet remains a fatal truth to be told them, the inevitable confequence of their fubjection to this monfter: a truth which I confider as the moft folemn, the moft alarming that can ever ftrike the underftanding of an intelligent being. And this is, the fatal tendency of fin to ftifle in us all tafte for virtue, and to lead us on to fuch a ftate of depravity and wickednefs, that to do good is hateful to us; and when once we are arrived at this terrible degree of corruption, the conqueft of fin over us is fecure, for we are incapable of difcerning *the things that*

belong

belong to our peace; they are foolishness unto us, neither can we know them. And lastly, to complete the evil, sin deprives of the only resource that could yet remain to extricate us from the gulph of misery in which we are plunged, by creating in us an aversion to truth. Truth, did we not fly from it, might discover to us our miserable condition, fill us with a lively and salutary horror, with a sincere and ardent desire of escaping it; and by its celestial ray *transform us by the renewing of our minds,* till it had caused us to experience that *the will of God,* which by our sins we had dared to oppose, was indeed *a good, an acceptable, and a perfect will.* But sin, by the hatred which it inspires for truth, detains us in chains of darkness, and closes every avenue by which the light could find access to our hearts. It causes us to neglect and despise the means of instruction with which we are encompassed, and creates in us the most insurmountable obduracy of heart. Such is the dreadful nature of sin considered in itself.

If ſuch then is its nature, may I not expect to be aſked, why is it not an evil, an evil greater than can be expreſſed? and how I can maintain, that under the conduct of God all is right; and that there exiſts no real evil in the univerſe? How then! ſhall not ſin be called a real evil? Is not that an evil which cauſes us to reject ſupreme happineſs; which corrupts us till we become monſters of depravity and wickedneſs; which makes us ſo totally blind to our true intereſt, that we prefer darkneſs to light; and thus leads us to the moſt hardened obduracy? Ah! take heed, will ſuch ſay, leſt in treating this difficult and thorny queſtion, you draw down on your own head, the woe denounced upon thoſe *who call evil good.*

In anſwer to this objection I agree, that ſin, *conſidered in its own nature*, is a greater evil than can ever be expreſſed. I acknowledge that it is impoſſible to exaggerate its turpitude; nor have I, in enumerating its malignant effects, in the leaſt palliated its unhappy tendency, to produce the greateſt pain

pain and diftrefs to whoever is infected with it. But neverthelefs, a confidence arifing from the moft perfect certainty, enables me to repeat, that *fin, confidered in its confequences and effects, is not a real evil;* and I hope not to quit this fubject till I have made this clearly appear.

If fin, or moral evil, was to reign forever in the heart of man, I fhould be the laft to affirm that it was not a real evil. On the contrary, I fhould never have engaged in my prefent defign; nor have attempted to unfold a fcheme, of which the bare idea would make me tremble. For, if we grant the eternal duration of fin, we muft determine it to be an infinite evil, whether confidered in its nature, or in its effects. Upon this fuppofition, what is its nature but the eternal revolt of finners againft God, and their eternal progrefs in wickednefs? Confidered in its confequences and effects, it would be the eternal fource of the greateft mifery. Let us not dwell on a fuppofition equally oppofed to the nature of a Being perfectly good,

and to that of creatures *made after His image;* but confider moral evil in its true light; view it as finite in duration; as an enemy, which will fooner or later be vanquifhed in every heart. When the Supreme Being created man for happinefs, He certainly knew how far fin would prove the obftacle of this felicity: He knew that our whole race would become its flaves, in a greater or lefs degree, and incapable of extricating themfelves from its unhappy influence: *but the things which are impoffible with men, are poffible with God;* and therefore a Being perfectly good, knew by what means He could accomplifh the deftruction of fin in every heart: this is the object of all the divine difpenfations, in nature and revelation; the great end which the wifdom of God propofes in His providential government: this was the work which the Redeemer of the world was fent to accomplifh, when He came *to fave us from our fins.*

The means by which this change is to be effected, will no doubt, be painful, though abfolutely

abſolutely neceſſary, and finally efficacious; for moral evil muſt be ſubdued by phyſical evil, by the miſeries and ſufferings inflicted on the ſinner here; and by the far more terrible, and more durable agonies of an unhappy hereafter; ſo that phyſical evil can never be terminated till it has accompliſhed the entire extinction of moral evil. This I have proved already in treating of the infinite juſtice of the Supreme Being, where I conſidered all ſuffering, preſent, and future, as chaſtiſements inflicted *for our profit, that we might be made partakers of the divine holineſs.* When theſe ſhall have produced their effect, and the enemy of happineſs is ſubdued in every heart; when infinite goodneſs ſhall thus have made mankind wiſe and virtuous, and reduced their wills to a perfect conformity to His; then, and not till then, will the current of His mercy flow in an uninterrupted courſe; then will the Creator and Redeemer of mankind open to them the inexhauſtible treaſures of felicity and glory; then will every difficulty diſappear, and the adorable goodneſs of the

Lord

Lord ſhine in full ſplendor, every heart will exult with joy and gratitude, and every tongue will be tuned to praiſe, thankful for thoſe very ſufferings *which have worked a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. This is the period, the glorious and certain period, to which we muſt direct our thoughts, if we would form juſt ideas of the nature of evil; which however great, is not abſolute, ſince it leads to real and infinite good.

I know of but one cloud that may ſhade the luſtre of this truth, to ſome of my readers: but as to them it may appear impenetrable, I muſt ſtate the difficulty, and endeavour to obviate it. It is this: If we allow the Creator to be as infinitely powerful, as He is perfectly good; why did He not make all His creatures wiſe and good, virtuous and holy, from the commencement of their exiſtence? Why did He not appoint their perfection and felicity, to be coeval with their being, and exclude every kind of evil, by forming them in that ſtate

 of

of perfection which their natures are capable of attaining?

I admit that this ideal ſyſtem is pleaſing to the imagination; that it repreſents a world far different from that which we inhabit; a world where ſin and diſorder, ſuffering and affliction, would find no entrance; and where the torments prefigured under the *wrath to come*, would never alarm; becauſe, thoſe alſo would be abſolutely uſeleſs.

But this, alas! is only a dream, delightful if you will, but exiſting only in our imagination, and abſolutely contradicted by facts. Moral, and phyſical evil actually do exiſt; and frail mortals are ſinful and unhappy. Such is the fact. This earth, peopled by a ſucceſſion of beings in the infancy of their exiſtence, is peopled alſo by ignorant and ſinful mortals; it is filled with their diſorders and miſeries; with their crimes and ſufferings: ſuch is the fact; evil exiſts, and yet it appears to us, that it were

far

far better it had never been. How are we then to escape from such a labyrinth?

Before we enter on the solution of this difficulty, let us reflect for a moment who, and what we are, who thus arraign the works of the Almighty. Alas! are we not weak, ignorant, short-sighted mortals; creatures of yesterday, inhabiting a small speck in the immence universe? Let us therefore take heed when we ask of God, *why He has made us thus?* lest the question should proceed from a criticising and rebellious spirit. But should it on the contrary arise from a desire of information, and a thirst after truth, it will not then be reprehensible, or offensive to the fountain of all truth; *for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to come at the knowledge of the truth.* With these laudible sentiments, let us therefore enquire, *why the Divine Being did not create us at first, as perfect, and as holy as we shall be, when we are arrived at the mansions of bliss?*

I might in the firſt place anſwer, that were we perfectly acquainted with human nature, we ſhould perhaps diſcern that holineſs, from *influx*, is an impoſſible and chimerical idea; becauſe, perfect holineſs, being the moral perfection of our wills, neceſſarily ſuppoſes the perfection of our underſtanding, and conſequently the development of our faculties; the accumulation of light and knowledge, acquired by their exerciſe: that while we are thus acquiring knowledge by experience, the freedom of our wills, which conſtitute us accountable beings, will leave us liable to wander from the right way; and that during ſuch deviations, we may become corrupted and depraved by the force of habit. In a word, had we a perfect knowledge of human nature, it is probable we ſhould perceive that though man is by his nature, capable of attaining to a holineſs, comparatively perfect, it muſt become his own by the exerciſe of his faculties, which renders him liable to moral evil; and to phyſical evil, which is its neceſſary remedy.

But

But though we poſſeſs preſumptive evidence of all this, yet I decline grounding my anſwer upon probability: I have therefore only glanced at theſe reflections to ſhew, that to be able to form a right judgment, and aſſertain the poſſibility, or impoſſibility of the queſtion before us; we ought to be endowed with a perfect knowledge of human nature. Let theſe reflections produce in our hearts ſentiments of diffidence and reſpect, when we ſpeak of Him, *whoſe ways are in the deep;* the Father of light, before whom we are darkneſs.

But let us quit the path of doubt and uncertainty, and give a deciſive anſwer to the queſtion: *why the Divine Being did not create us at firſt as perfect, and as holy, as we ſhall be, when we arrive at the manſions of bliſs.*

The fact then is, as the queſtion ſuppoſes, that the Creator has not acted thus; that in forming this world He has not excluded moral and phyſical evil. This is ſufficient

for me, it is all I require, to be perfectly assured that this exclusion was impossible; or in other words, that moral and physical evil were the natural consequences of that freedom of will necessary to beings in a state of probation, and improvement. We may therefore say, that the total exclusion of evil, was not an object for the Divine Omnipotence to exercise itself upon; because God cannot contradict himself. *Every act of God is an act of infinite goodness:* it was perfect goodness created the world, and permited the entrance of all the evils we deplore. Now Divine Goodness can only be called infinite, or perfect, because it makes the best choice, and produces the greatest good. We may therefore be assured that this world, formed as it is, is best adapted to the end; an end most perfect and excellent; and that it was not possible to create us in the beginning as holy and as perfect as we shall be hereafter. Had it been possible, or, which is the same thing with God, had it been fit and right; infinite Wisdom and Goodness would not have acted otherwise.

We

We may now admit as a truth, what we have juſt advanced on the footing of probability; that *holineſs from influx*, is impoſſible; becauſe deſtructive of moral agency, which both ſuppoſes, and requires, a ſtate of ſchooling, preparative to one of perfection and felicity.

Let us therefore acknowledge that theſe finite evils are not real evils; becauſe by their means mankind are raiſed to ſupreme and univerſal happineſs; and therefore, *that under the government and providence of a Being infinitely good, every thing will be ultimately right, and that there neither is, or ever can exiſt any real evil in the univerſe.*

In applying this our third conſequence, to the various evils we ſee in the world, I have given the only ſatisfactory anſwer to the celebrated queſtion, reſpecting the *origin of evil*, which has always been conſidered as difficult and embaraſſing; and exerciſed at different times, the greateſt geniuſes, both ancient and modern. In all I have ever

read on this ſubject, I have ſeen the *infinite* duration of evil granted; whence it became impoſſible to ſolve the difficulty; for who can reconcile infinite evil with infinite goodneſs, infinite cruelty with infinite love? But though theſe contradictions cannot be conciliated, we ſhall find no difficulty in conceiving the admiſſion of finite evil, when it is a mean by which creatures may be raiſed to the perfection of which their natures are ſuſceptible, and made fit for the enjoyment of complete happineſs. This is the only kind of evil, which a Being perfectly good can ever admit into His plan; and the only ſatisfactory method of accounting for its exiſtence.

Various, no doubt, have been the anſwers to this thorny queſtion; and one of the moſt plauſible, in order to juſtify the goodneſs of God in inflicting never-ending torments on the reprobate; is by ſuppoſing *thoſe eternal ſufferings neceſſary, to procure the eternal happineſs, not barely of the elect,* but as one world is connected with another, in

in the immense fyftem; *of a multitude of other creatures.* This folution has been received with avidity by numbers who fincerely fought the truth; but whofe minds were prepoffeffed by the fuppofition of the endlefs duration of torments, fo as never to entertain a doubt on the fubject. A belief fo oppofed to the divine goodnefs; throws the mind into a reftlefs and uneafy ftate, from whence it eagerly defires an efcape, and hopes to have effected, in the above folution; which makes the infinite mifery of fome, conducive to the infinite happinefs of others. They would not certainly be deceived by fuch an argument, did they not rejoice to find fome valuable end anfwered by the fufferings of the reprobate; and in this idea of felicity, imagine they fee the traces of the infinite goodnefs of their Creator. If they cannot entirely diveft themfelves of the feelings of pity and compaffion, for the many victims thus devoted to eternal mifery, they endeavor to leffen the uneafy fenfation by reflecting, that fuch have brought it on themfelves, by an obftinate re-

ſiſtance to the grace of God. Beſides, it may be urged, is not the felicity and glory of an innumerable multitude of intelligences, reſulting from this evil, an ample compenſation for the eternal perdition of theſe wilful ſinners? And with this wretched ſolution, do men content themſelves.

To neglect nothing on a ſubject of ſuch importance, I muſt briefly examine this pretended ſolution; the ſtrange method of felicity it preſents, in making the infinite miſery of ſome, a neceſſary mean of happineſs to others. Among a multitude of objections I could find to this horrid method of procuring felicity, which preſents on all ſides the moſt evident contradictions; I ſhall confine myſelf to proving, that this method of proceeding would be with reſpect to the reprobate, unjuſt, and cruel; and with reſpect to the bleſſed ſubverſive of its end.

To render a multitude of intelligent beings eternally happy; is an object ſo ſublime and excellent, that we may eſteem it worthy of

of the moſt exalted ideas we can form of infinite wiſdom, and goodneſs; provided however that the means neceſſary to their perfection and felicity, are the gift of God, in conſequence of their having improved the faculties with which He has endowed them, and the means of grace and ſalvation He has offered them by His goſpel. But to render creatures happy, their numbers ever ſo great, by the infliction of eternal miſery on the reprobate, would be a method moſt unjuſt, and cruel. Let us not aſſert by way of juſtification, that the reprobate have deſerved the unremitting torments they endure; for if, as ſome ſay, the fault is their own, I aſk whether exiſtence was their fault alſo? was it not *the Lord that made them, and not they themſelves?* Is it not true, that they were not culpable prior to their exiſtence, and could not then deſerve any ſuffering? And can we deny, that the divine mind was perfectly acquainted with the uſe they would make of exiſtence; that it would never be other than a ſtate of ſuffering and miſery? Is it not true that exiſtence beſtowed on ſuch

terms

terms is to the creature, an infinite evil? And that the irrefiftible fiat which brought them into being, was the greateft evil that could poffibly befall them; and this at a time when they could have no demerit, but were perfectly innocent? I leave every candid mind to determine how an irrefiftible act which produces infinite evil, to innocent beings, is to be qualified; if it is not an act fovereignly unjuft and barbarous? We may therefore infer with certainty, that a Being perfectly good will never adopt fuch a method into His plan.

Let us now confider this pretended means of felicity to the bleffed: and fhew, that as far as it concerns their happinefs, *it is a mean deftructive of its end.*

It is not an eafy thing to conceive, how the infinite mifery of the reprobate can be a mean, and a neceffary mean, of happinefs to the bleffed. Can we fuppofe that intelligent creatures capable by their nature of perfection and felicity, would be unable to attain

attain to this glorious deſtination, unleſs at the ſame time a number of intelligent beings exiſted in eternal miſery? Among creatures of the ſame nature, thence capable of the ſame happineſs; muſt a part be made happy at the expence of a conſiderable portion devoted to endleſs miſery and deſpair? Cannot a Being infinitely perfect and happy communicate beatitude to his intelligent offſpring on other and more favourable terms? Can He not be to ſome the inexhauſtible ſource of happineſs; unleſs He is to others, the never-failing ſource of miſery? But let us ceaſe to heap contradiction on contradiction, horror upon horror, and end this diſagreeable diſcuſſion, by ſhewing that the eternal miſery of the reprobate, inſtead of being a neceſſary mean of happineſs to the bleſſed, would on the contrary poiſon and deſtroy their felicity, *and prove ſubverſive of its end.*

In the firſt place, it would poiſon the felicity of the bleſſed. The inhabitants of heaven could not be happy unleſs pene-

trated with the moſt ardent charity for their fellow-creatures; for St. Paul tells us *that without charity we are nothing.* In this reſpect therefore as well as in many others, the bleſſed will reſemble *the angels of God in heaven;* thoſe kind compaſſionate ſpirits, who intereſt themſelves in the converſion and ſalvation of ſinful mortals; inſomuch *that there is joy* amongſt them *over one ſinner that repenteth.* It would therefore be impoſſible that the righteous in glory, fired with celeſtial charity, ſhould taſte the joys of paradiſe while they knew that a great number of fellow beings, were the prey of never ending torments. They muſt neceſſarily and ardently wiſh for the deliverance, and ſalvation of theſe unhappy beings; and at the ſame time be convinced that this ardent and eternal deſire of their hearts would never be ſatisfied; ſo that their charity would be the ſource of their miſery; *a never dying worm* in their breaſt which would render them unhappy in the manſions of bliſs. O divine charity! thou greateſt, moſt ſublime, moſt godlike of virtues; thou who art the glory

and

and excellence of intelligent creatures, and alone can make them *partakers of the divine nature*, art thou deftined to become the torment of the juft in heaven !

But how much more painful ftill would it be to the righteous to know; that thefe eternal fufferings, deftitute of any valuable purpofe to the culpable individual, were neceffary means of procuring their happinefs? Would not every poffibility of enjoyment vanifh, at the idea of poffeffing it at the expence of thefe deplorable victims of diftrefs? The beft characters here below are alas! very far from having acquired that feraphic charity which will animate the fpirits of the bleffed; for while here, we are in our beft eftate, as our Saviour declares in the feventh chapter of St. Matthew, *evil;* and yet with the feeble fpark of charity I poffefs, and I doubt not but every one of my readers can join in the fentiment, I had rather never have exifted, than be affured that the eternal happinefs defigned me, was the refult of the eternal fufferings, not of a multitude, but of

of an individual creature. Exiſtence is not neceſſary; but if once I exiſt I muſt deſire happineſs. And what felicity O God! muſt that be which is founded upon, or even encreaſed by the miſery of others! Do we not perceive ſuch a mean deſtructive of its end?

I add in the ſecond place, *that it would entirely deſtroy the happineſs of the righteous.* Charity conſiſts in conſtantly placing ourſelves in the ſituation of others; upon this principle, what muſt the feelings of the juſt be? ſurely of a nature quite oppoſed to happineſs. What would they diſcover in their maker? Not infinite, diſintereſted, adorable goodneſs, but a partial and imperfect favor, conſequently a doubtful and uncertain benevolence; if that title is any way applicable to a diſpoſition compatible with injuſtice and cruelty. What a deplorable change does this ſuppoſition make in the happineſs of heaven! ſin might indeed be for ever excluded, but ſorrow would find an entrance; and that perfect admiration, that entire confidence; that celeſtial love

for the greateſt and beſt of Beings, which muſt unite the ſouls of the juſt to their ſovereign good; would be poiſoned in its ſource. No, *fulneſs of joy* muſt reſide *in His preſence, and at His right hand pleaſures for evermore.* Pardon, O my God! Thou moſt perfectly good and merciful Being, who art the ſubſtance of all that excellence, of which we frail and ſinful beings can diſcern but the ſhadow; forgive I beſeech Thee! if but for a moment, I am led to ſpeak of Thee, not as Thou art, and as Thou ever wilt ſhew thyſelf to all thy creatures; but ſuch as the prejudices and paſſions of men would make Thee appear!

Thus we ſee that the eternal miſery of the wicked, cannot contribute to the felicity of the righteous; it would be both unjuſt and cruel, and even deſtructive of its end; conſequently can never be adopted into the plan of a perfectly good and wiſe Being.

Thus am I come to the concluſion of my third conſequence from the infinite Goodneſs of God, *that all His acts are acts of*

 goodneſs.

goodneſs. I have eſtabliſhed its truth, I have demonſtrated its extent, and have ſhewn *that the Supreme Governor of the univerſe, preſides over and directs every event to ultimate good; therefore that whatever may befall His creatures in time, or in eternity, proceeds from infinite goodneſs in the Firſt Cauſe, and is to each of them the greateſt poſſible good.* I have applied this to preſent, and future evil; and have demonſtrated *that under the government and providence of an all perfect Being, every thing is ultimately right, and that in His univerſe, no real evil can exiſt;* which has led me to examine the celebrated queſtion *of the origin of moral evil,* to which I hope I have given a ſatisfactory reply.

By the aid of this ſolution, we may affirm, *that all the evils the Divine Being diſpenſes to his creatures, whether here, or hereafter, proceed from His infinite goodneſs;* or in other words, *that it is impoſſible He ſhould ever diſpenſe any evil in this world, or in the world to come; which is not even to the individuals, an actual exerciſe of perfect Goodneſs.*

SECT.

SECT. II.

Practical conſequences to be derived from the infinite goodneſs of God.

THE *practical,* or *moral* conſequences ariſing from the infinite goodneſs of God; are the various ſentiments naturally produced in the heart by the knowledge of this ſupreme goodneſs; where the underſtanding is thoroughly convinced of its truth. And though their enumeration is in ſome meaſure foreign to a work particularly dedicated to the theory of religion; I nevertheleſs propoſed admitting them into my plan from a conviction of their extreme importance and tendency to render us wiſe, good, perfect and happy.

Theſe important and valuable effects, are reducible to three heads; as they relate to ourſelves, to the Divine Being, and to our fellow creatures; ſuch as *internal joy, love of God, and charity to our neighbour.* I ſhall therefore obſerve by way of fourth conſequence that *the infinite goodneſs of God is the only ſolid foundation of prevailing and continual joy.*

I know that He who made me, is a Being perfectly good, a Father whoſe love is infinite, and who by an effect of that love gave me exiſtence, *that I might obtain happineſs;* to proclaim and accompliſh which, He has ſent His Son from heaven and delivered him up to ſufferings and death; and with this precious gift, does He not *give me all things?* His laws, His diſpenſations, His bleſſings, His chaſtiſements, in a word every event that befalls me, tends to promote this great end; and to aſſure me, that this perfectly good Being, will confer upon me to all eternity all poſſible good. What perfect joy may now take poſſeſſion of my heart! I may

rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory! I may prize the precious gift of life, ſince I exiſt by the good pleaſure of my faithful Creator; and for a bleſſed eternity! during which I ſhall never ceaſe to be the happy object of His care and love! and is not this a ſubject for prevailing and continual joy?

It is the ſubject of *prevailing* joy, as it fills and occupies my whole heart; ſorrow and affliction, under what form ſoever they may aſſault me, muſt fly before it; for what are they when compared with ſo ſincere, ſo permanent a joy? The contemplation of the Being perfectly good, *ſhall put a gladneſs into my heart,* a balm of conſolation and ſupport, which all the evils of time ſhall in vain attempt to deſtroy: for in theſe evils, I behold the chaſtening of parental kindneſs improving my moral nature; and conſider them therefore as *real benefits*; ſince by their means I ſhall one day arrive at perfection, and happineſs. The farther effects of this prevailing joy, are *perfect contentment* in every ſituation and condition of life; *pa-*

tience under affliction, and a degree of *courage and ſtrength* which makes me riſe ſuperior to every trial, *and more than conqueror through Him that has loved me.*

I have alſo ſaid in the ſecond place, that the knowledge of the infinite extent of Divine Goodneſs, gives riſe to *continual* joy. If I never loſe ſight of a Being conſtantly employed in promoting my happineſs; if I call to mind his benefits *when ſitting in my houſe and when walking by the way, when I lie down and when I riſe up,* can ſorrow ever penetrate my heart, or affliction diſpel the tranſporting delight ariſing from an aſſurance of the paternal love of my Creator? *If I ſet the Lord always before me,* if I thus habituate my mind to *His preſence which is fulneſs of joy*; if His adorable goodneſs is the firſt object that employs my waking thoughts; may I not hope from ſuch contemplation that ſerenity and peace, contentment and joy will accompany me through the day? *O Lord ſatisfy me early with thy*

mercy;

mercy; that I may rejoice and be glad all my days.

Such is the *prevailing*, the *conſtant joy* produced by the knowledge of the infinite goodneſs of God, which can never abandon us in life, or in death; the ſource of preſent, as well as of future happineſs; and the *only permanent foundation* on which to build our hope. Eternity without this, affords a dreary and uncertain proſpect, more calculated to raiſe anxiety, and apprehenſion, than to exite ſatisfaction and joy. To eſcape from thoſe horrors, which await ſo many of my fellow beings, would afford me little joy; for with a nature more charitable and perfect than what I now poſſeſs, what terror and amazement, muſt the infinite ſufferings of the wicked excite in my compaſſionate and benevolent mind? What an influence has this idea on my beſt expectations, how it damps the joys of immortality!

But forever let me adore and bless the Father of mercies, who has given me such unquestionable evidence of His almighty goodness, by which I know that the immortality for which He has caused me to exist, is a truly precious and valuable gift of His infinite love; *and that He is able to do for me, exceeding and abundantly above all that I can ask or think.*

Is there not then, let me ask, sufficient reason for joy in the infinite goodness of God? To you, whose happiness it is to possess this knowledge I particularly address myself. You I exhort *to rejoice in hope, to be patient in tribulation, to continue instant in prayer; to rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say to rejoice;* for you possess *in the infinite goodness of God, the only solid foundation of prevailing, and continual joy.*

Our fifth consequence is designed to shew, *That the infinite goodness of God, is the only foundation of our supreme love to Him.*

Love to God, is one of the moſt poſſitive precepts in the goſpel, it is diſtinguiſhed *as the firſt, and great command;* inſiſted upon in terms the moſt energetic, as a ſupreme affection that muſt fill every capacity of the ſoul: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy thought, and with all thy ſtrength.*

To form a right judgment of this *great command,* I muſt begin by diſtinguiſhing the precepts of ſcripture, as they relate either to the injunction of external actions, or to the ſentiments of the heart. The obſervance of the former depends upon my will. For however great my repugnance to an external action may be; nevertheleſs it is in my power to obey. But it is not thus with relation to thoſe precepts which are deſigned for the government of my internal ſentiments; theſe are not equally at my diſpoſal, nor do they depend on my will; I cannot therefore from obedience to any command, be joyful when I am ſad, or afflicted,

flicted, when I have caufe to rejoice; I cannot love what I hate, or hate what I love; and thence arifes that proverbial expreffion, *that our fentiments are not at our command.*

But if the fentiments of our hearts are not to be controlled by our wills; whence is it, let me afk, that the divine word abounds with precepts for their regulation? not only relative to our love to God, but to our felf-denial, our detachment from the world, our humility, patience, charity; our love of our enemies, and forgivenefs of injuries? are not thefe fentiments of the heart, and do not the divine laws extend to them?

The difcuffion of this queftion, will lead me to a fhort digreffion *on the divine laws,* which as it is not foreign to my principal fubject, will I truft be no ways unacceptable to my readers.

Human laws, cannot penetrate beyond external actions; but the laws of God muft go farther, and regulate the fentiments of the

the heart; ſo that we may affirm, that the divine commands are directed to our internal actions; ſince the ſentiments which lead us to obedience, can alone give it any value in the ſight of God. Scripture commands us to give alms; but tells us alſo *that though* we *beſtow all* our *goods to feed the poor, and give* our *bodies to be burned, and have not charity, it will profit* us *nothing:* accordingly our Lord has declared, *that a good man out of the good treaſure of his heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treaſure bringeth forth evil things: for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,* and all thoſe crimes that ſpread terror and deſolation over the earth.

Such are the Divine laws; and their deſign to regulate our hearts, clearly points out the grandeur of the deſtination to which we are called. Our Supreme Law-giver requires us to reſemble Him in perfection and felicity: this is the glorious rank to which He will elevate us, but which He knows we

cannot

cannot attain, till our hearts are replete with pious and charitable ſentiments: it is therefore *that the Lord looketh on the heart*, and by His precepts directs and governs our inmoſt ſentiments.

To *try the heart and the reins*, is a truly divine prerogative, which can only belong to the Being who formed us. He knows how to purify our hearts, by enlightening our underſtandings. He gives us in his word both inſtructions and promiſes; that by the *obedience of faith, our hearts may be ſanctified;* enjoining us at the ſame time the cultivation of ſuch ſentiments as the light He has given us, is calculated to produce. Thus for inſtance, when He ſets life and a bleſſed immortality before us; He bids *us to rejoice evermore*. Again, He diſplays Himſelf to us under moſt affecting characters of love and goodneſs; and then commands us *to love him with all our hearts*. Ah! let us then be perſuaded, when we feel not the diſpoſitions and ſentiments which the Divine Being has made both our duty and our intereſt;

tereſt; let us be aſſured, that the fault is our own; that we have neglected to nouriſh our ſouls with the bread of life; that we have not ſufficiently attended to the ſublime truths, to the magnificent objects His word ſets before us; and which, were they frequently preſented to our minds, could not fail of raiſing them far above the world, producing in us the moſt delightful ſentiments of peace, of joy, and of love.

It does not certainly depend upon ourſelves to adopt theſe ſentiments by an inſtantaneous act of the will, in the manner we perform any external act of obedience: and in this ſenſe alone it is true, *that our ſentiments are not under our command.* But it is in our power to acquire the diſpoſitions God requires of us; to excite them in our hearts; and to cheriſh and ſtrengthen them more and more, by reading and meditating on His word, with aſſiduous and conſtant attention. Let us daily have recourſe to the divine inſtruction contained in the goſpel; where the Son of God himſelf points out

the

the *things which belong to our peace.* This ſacred volume is to ſincere chriſtians, *the bread of God which came down from heaven to give life to the ſoul;* a new and ſpiritual life, an *eternal life abiding in us.* It preſents to our contemplation two intereſting objects. GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, AND A CELESTIAL IMMORTALITY. And if it is certain that our minds are formed for *knowledge,* and our ſouls for *love;* how are theſe ſacred pages which contain *the knowledge of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord,* adapted to theſe ends; *according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godlineſs.*

Mankind when they diſregard the word of God, do not ſurely attend to the extreme folly and criminality of their neglect. Has the Being of Beings condeſcended to ſend His Son upon earth, to enlighten our darkneſs, to inſtruct us in His will, to publiſh life, and immortality, and ſhew us the road to happineſs: has this precious and wonderful light been tranſmitted to us in His goſpel; has

has He deſtined us *to be born again of incorruptible ſeed by His word which liveth and abideth forever;* and ſhall we ſuffer our lives to wear away without making any uſe of it: and while every other book is familiar to us, remain ſtrangers to this ſacred volume and immerſed in worldly concerns, as though our reſidence here, were to laſt forever? how many profeſſing chriſtians are guilty of this ſhameful, this fooliſh neglect! Were it poſſible that we could deſire to be our own enemies; could we take a ſurer method of ſucceſs, than with wanton levity to diſregard thoſe powerful ſuccours of grace, under which we live? Nay more, were it poſſible for us to deſire to ſet the Almighty at defiance; could we purſue a more efficacious method, than in thus abuſing, perhaps throughout the courſe of our lives, the precious gifts He has vouchſafed us, neglecting and deſpiſing his offered aſſiſtance; and treating alike with the diſdain of contemptuous forgetfulneſs, His commands, His promiſes, and His threatenings? But *God is not mocked,* nor can we elude the execution of his

his immutable deſigns. If we refuſe to be enlightened by His word, He will have recourſe to the ſeverities of His wrath, to overcome our obſtinate reſiſtance; for thus ſaith the Lord by the mouth of His prophet Iſaiah, *the word that goeth forth out of my mouth ſhall not return unto me void, but it ſhall accompliſh that which I pleaſe, and it ſhall proſper in the thing whereunto I ſent it.* How heavy will be the accuſation of ſuch hereafter, who have been guilty of this contemptuous and criminal neglect of the Divine word!

I rejoice that the digreſſion on which I entered, furniſhed me with an opportunity of exhorting my fellow chriſtians to avoid this common, this alarming, and fatal evil.

Let us return to our ſubject. Since the Being who made us, commands us to love Him with all the powers He has given us; His nature muſt be ſuch as naturally to produce this ſupreme love; St. John founds it upon His goodneſs, when he ſays, *we love*

Him,

Him, becauſe he firſt loved us. That infinite goodneſs, is therefore *the only ſolid foundation of ſupreme love*; I ſhall now proceed to explain.

In this perfect goodneſs, I diſcover three reaſons productive of my entire love. The firſt conſiſts *in the benefits I have hitherto experienced,* which excite *my grateful love.* The ſecond ariſes *from the promiſed bleſſings of eternity*; which produce *a love founded on intereſt.* The third, reſults from that infinite goodneſs which reſides in the Deity, and which conſtitute Him the object of my utmoſt admiration, *and moſt perfect filial attachment.*

The firſt reaſon on which I found my love for the Supreme Being, is that of *gratitude for benefits received.* What are theſe benefits? Alas! when they are more in number than the ſand on the ſea ſhore, how can I attempt to enumerate them! Ten thouſand have eſcaped my recollection from my weakneſs, and alas! ten thouſand times ten thou-

ſand from my ſtupidity or inattention. But this I know, that from the firſt moment of my exiſtence to the preſent; the goodneſs of God has not ceaſed to accompany me, and to beſtow upon me every ſuitable benefit. Let me ſeek to place them under different claſſes, that thus I may taſte *that the Lord is good*, or in other words, that I may love him for the multitude of His mercies.

Creation is the firſt of His benefits. Self-exiſtent, neceſſary, and infinite, in every perfection; the Divine Being could have no need of me, nor would His power have produced me, had he not deſigned to manifeſt His love towards me. The life I have received, comprehends the wonderful and admirable ſtructure of my body, and its various organs, or inlets to the mind. Alſo, that *living ſoul*, with all its admirable faculties, whoſe excellence as far exceeds that of the body, as life is ſuperior to death; the inhabitant to the habitation: it comprehends the *ſenſes* I poſſeſs, by which I am enabled to behold, and to enjoy the works of nature:

imagination,

imagination, which enlarges the boundaries of thoſe ſenſes and extends my exiſtence to various periods and different parts of the world: *memory*, by whoſe aſſiſtance I call back a numerous train of objects; and which is the receptacle of my acquired ideas: *reflection and underſtanding* to combine and perfect thoſe ideas: laſtly, *reaſon* or *intelligence* by which I am enabled to diſcover truth, increaſe my ſtore of knowledge, and elevate my mind to the ſublime contemplation of my Creator: it comprehends that *ſenſibility of heart* to which ſome have given the appellation of *moral ſenſe*, which naturally inclines the mind to love, and purſue good, as far as it can trace it; and above all to love God as its ſupreme good. By all theſe faculties which are the gift of God, He has made me ſuſceptible of pleaſure and joy; and capable of an ever increaſing felicity. To ſum up all in a word, *He has made me after His own image:* my intellectual nature conformable to His, by a capacity of *becoming a partaker in the divine nature*, by holineſs, perfection, and happineſs. What

excellence, what dignity then has He beſtowed upon me; for as St. Paul ſays *am I not alſo His offspring?* is He not my father; am I not His child, and does not this creative act of his will, give me the moſt ſolemn and ſacred pledge of his immutable love and goodneſs? for He is *a faithful Creator, who will not abandon the work of His hands.*

How various, how extenſive then, are the benefits reſulting from creation! Exiſtence, *a body fearfully and wonderfully made!* An intellectual ſoul, capable of knowing, loving, and reſembling its Maker! and a pledge and aſſurance that infinite goodneſs will never forſake his creatures. *Bleſs the Lord then, O my ſoul, and let all that is within me, bleſs His holy name!*

After enumerating the bleſſings of creation, I may rank under the ſecond claſs, *thoſe of Providence.* And what is providence? with relation to me, it is *the continual care with which divine goodneſs has watched over my body and ſoul.*

Have

Have I ever been forgotten or neglected for a single instant amidst the immensity of the works of God? Has not His wisdom in every varying circumstance, constantly provided and dispensed, that which was fittest and best for me.

My body, which at first was an imperceptible atom, must have perished in its germe, had not divine providence perfected and sustained it. Those who are most conversant with the human frame, most acquainted with its developments, and revolutions; know the amazing care, the wonderful wisdom requisite to bring it to perfection. *I will praise Thee,* O Lord, *for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret; and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth: Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how*

great is the ſum of them! if I would count them, they are more in number than the ſand.

Since I have been arrived at a ſtate of maturity, how many are the bleſſings I have enjoyed? Has not the earth brought forth her increaſe, and been conſtantly covered with an aſtoniſhing profuſion and variety of bleſſings? How manifold are thoſe ariſing from the arts and ſciences, and from the induſtry of men! and amidſt the general comforts of ſocial life; how many private bleſſings have I experienced in my particular calling!

But I have alſo ſaid, that the providence of God, conſtantly watches over and ſupplies the wants of my ſoul. When my eyes firſt opened upon the light, I poſſeſſed a living ſoul; but that ſoul was in its loweſt ſtate. It contained the eſſence of all its future faculties, but torpid inactive, deſtitute of a ſingle idea, of any knowledge whatever, ſcarce ſenſible of exiſtence; how deplorable would have been its condition, had it not been

been upheld by the hand that made it! When I compare my prefent ftate with the firft dawn of reafon, I behold in the progrefs and improvement of my faculties, a fubject of gratitude and praife; for however flow, however imperceptible have been my advances, yet in every ftep I have made towards perfection, I have experienced the bleffing of Providence in affording helps and means to thofe fuperior faculties, which are deftined hereafter to become the fources of my perfection, and felicity. Deftitute of fuch means and affiftance, my foul muft have remained in a ftate little better than that of the brutes. It is therefore to the goodnefs of God, and to His watchful providence, that I owe all thefe mercies.

But this is not all; greater benefits remain yet to be told; for while my animal powers were acquiring ftrength and maturity, and my intellectual and rational faculties improving; fin, that deftroyer of my perfection and happinefs, has manifefted itfelf. The lively impreffions made by exter-

nal objects on my fenfes, and imagination, have excited in my foul a perverfe will, together with violent and unruly paffions, which foon becoming habitual, would have totally corrupted my foul with vices alike odious and fatal; had not the paternal care of divine Providence attached to fin, a reftraint calculated to fupprefs its depredations.

And what is this falutary reftraint capable of ftoping the ravages of fin? It is *death, which has paffed upon all men, for that all have finned;* it is alfo *all the numerous evils attendant upon a ftate of mortality*, by which infinite wifdom checks the progrefs of fin, and provides its neceffary remedy. Phyfical evil, or fufferings, He has attached to fin, and made its wages death, to ftem the torrent of moral evil. Had my foul been united to an *immortal* body, and this world my lafting refidence, I had been loft. My paffions would have become ungovernable, and reduced me to the horrible flavery of vice. But the wifdom of my Creator has prevented this evil, by connecting *forrow*

and

and death with this infant ſtate of being, and thereby made it a ſtate of *education.* Placed as I am here, a ſtranger and a pilgrim; uncertain of ſojourning another day; every object is tranſitory to me, and *all is vanity.* Is not this calculated to repel the force of my paſſions, and to excite my deſires after permanent life, and ſolid good? But leſt this ſhould be inſufficient; the evils I experience from without, and from within; damp the ardor of my paſſions, ſuſpend their career, give me time for recollection, that reaſon and reflection may find entrance into my mind; and incline me to *ſeek the Lord, if haply I might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.*

But though the means of which I have been ſpeaking, are abſolutely neceſſary, to remedy the evil of ſin; they are nevertheleſs inſufficient, for our ſalvation. God has therefore in His mercy given to us the aſſiſtance of His written word, made His laws the rule of our conduct, and His redemption by Jeſus Chriſt, the foundation of our hope.

This

This revelation, abſolutely neceſſary to the human race, will no doubt, one day become univerſal. In the mean time, ſince by the grace of God we are bleſſed with its light; let us make a proper improvement of our privilege, and not waſte our time in enquiring, why ſo great a portion of mankind are deprived of its advantages, certain as we may be, that their merciful Creator, loves them as their eternal Father; and that He will enlighten and ſave them, in the time and manner, which His wiſdom ſees moſt proper. I ſhall therefore continue to recapitulate the bleſſings of Providence towards me, which every chriſtian reader may apply to himſelf upon the ſame foundation.

To the bleſſings I have received in the ordinary courſe of Providence, I muſt add thoſe of a ſuperior order, which I owe to that wonderful œconomy of grace, under which it has been my happineſs to be born. Hitherto I have confined my views to the *natural benefits* of creation and providence,

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I will now confider fuch as *are fuperadded to nature.*

I fhall rank under a third clafs, the *bleffing of redemption. Redemption is the gift which God has beftowed upon me in His Son, in order to my falvation.* And here two fublime objects offer themfelves to my confideration; *the falvation* to which I am called, and the *gift of the only begotten Son of God,* who has brought *the glad tidings of peace*; and is become *the captain of our falvation* to lead us all to happinefs.

I refer my reader for a full difcuffion of this fubject to the preceding chapter; where it has been treated, in order to draw two proofs concerning the infinite goodnefs of God, I fhall therefore confine myfelf to fome detached obfervations on the unfpeakable benefit of redemption.

In the firft place, it was a gift prepared for me many ages before it took place, and preceded my birth more than feventeen centuries.

turies. May I not ſay that Divine goodneſs loved me prior to my exiſtence; ſince long before it took place He gave His Son for me, and thereby executed *the eternal purpoſe which He purpoſed in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.*

This gift is called *redemption,* becauſe it is the *price,* or *ranſom* by which *deliverance* and *ſalvation* were procured. What a ranſom! the Son of God, *only begotten and well-beloved,* in whom the *Father* was *well pleaſed*; a Being perfect and excellent, *was delivered up to death, even to the death of the croſs; was numbered with tranſgreſſors,* and experienced the ignominy and cruelty, of a ſhameful and agonizing death. How aſtoniſhing, how incomprehenſible is the love of God to ſinners! it *ſurpaſſeth knowledge:* muſt it not then infinitely ſurpaſs the powers of expreſſion? and can the utmoſt efforts of a creature to celebrate the goodneſs of the Lord, ever exaggerate its inconceivable magnitude?

On me, an unworthy, miferable finner, degraded, and difhonored by my departure from God, in a ftate of actual rebellion againft Him, whofe laws I had violated, and whofe image I had effaced in my foul; on me, and on a race of Beings like me unworthy; was this precious gift beftowed: He confidered not my *demerit*, but He faw my *mifery*; and had compaffion on it.

It is not for mortal man to penetrate into the depth of the divine counfels; but in the death of the Son of God, I difcern two important things, of which it was neceffary I fhould have the cleareft affurance. The firft of thefe *is falvation:* and the fecond, *the way to attain it.* This *is the life, the immortality brought to light by the gofpel;* by whofe affiftance I am enabled *to deny ungodlinefs and worldly luft, and to live foberly, righteoufly and godly, in the prefent world;* where I muft walk by faith, in thofe magnificent and gracious promifes, which are confirmed by the death, the refurrection, and afcenfion of my compaffionate and glorious Redeemer.

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It does not become us to enquire, why no other than this ſacred and holy Being was ſufficient to accompliſh this great work. For ſince the adorable goodneſs of the Father has beſtowed upon us His excellent and beloved Son; we may be aſſured, that no inferior nature was capable of accompliſhing the important taſk. Was ever charity like thine, merciful Saviour! *who loved us and gave thyſelf for us!*

This work of Redemption, is the utmoſt extent of Divine love. It is thus repreſented by the Supreme Being Himſelf, who makes it as it were the criterion of His willingneſs to confer upon us, whatever elſe may be needful for our happineſs. If His compaſſion for the ſinful children of men, is ſuch, that *He afflicts them only if need be; if judgment* on the guilty, *is His ſtrange work;* may we not rationally infer, that He would not have required ſuch uncommon and painful ſufferings, from ſo pure and excellent a Being, had they not been neceſſary to the

accomplishment of a scheme of benevolence, proportioned to the grandeur of the means?

The fourth and last class of benefits, which I have received from the infinite goodness of God *are those of revelation*, which with relation to me, *are the supernatural means by which God in His word enlightens my understanding and fortifies my faith.*

Revelation, contains all that which *God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,* together with what He has *in these last days spoken by His Son.* How gracious is that providence which has preserved and handed down these valuable oracles which are addressed to me, in consequence of my being born and educated in the church of Christ. When I compare my privileges, *I who from a child have known the holy scriptures,* with those of a poor savage, *who has no hope, and is without God in the world;* how greatly ought I to estimate them!

Revelation, *by the light of faith* illuminates my reaſon, it gives me the knowledge of God, my Creator and Father, and of eternal ſalvation to which I am called. What objects for thy contemplation, O my ſoul! in a Being perfectly excellent, and an immortality perfectly bleſſed! without theſe hopes, what were life? and with it, what are its greateſt evils?

I can now *look to Jeſus, as the author and finiſher of my faith;* in him I behold *God manifeſted in the fleſh;* He not only announces to me eternal life, by his promiſes; but as my forerunner he enters into it, by his death and reſurrection, and calls upon me, to follow him. Thus is He become *the way, the truth, and the life;* and if I poſſeſs faith in him, I may with St. Paul, *determine not to know any thing, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified; counting all things but loſs, for the excellency of this knowledge.*

But here it may be enquired, whether faith alone is ſufficient for my ſalvation and

ſanctification,

ſanctification, which is a gift of divine grace, not abſolutely neceſſary? ſince *without holineſs, no one ſhall ſee the Lord.* To this I reply, *that faith in the only begotten Son of God* is ſufficient, ſince we are aſſured that *whoſoever believeth in him, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life;* becauſe ſanctification is a neceſſary effect of this *faith, which is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen;* and an entire perſuaſion of their reality, will neceſſarily *ſanctify, transform,* and *renew* our hearts. Can I know the extent of divine goodneſs, and not love God with my whole heart, and my neighbour as myſelf? Can I perceive the benefit of eternal ſalvation, and not joyfully relinquiſh every thing in this world that may ſtand oppoſed to it? Thus does faith in Chriſt Jeſus, comprehend all thoſe virtues and graces, by which ſin and the world are to be ſubdued, and my ſanctification and ſalvation completed; for Chriſt is made unto ſuch as believe, *wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and complete redemption.*

By faith, I become united to my Saviour, from whom I derive continual light. *His ſpirit* dwells in me; and with it, all neceſſary aſſiſtance to work out my ſalvation. As a maſter He commands me what I am to perform; and will hereafter judge me concerning my obedience. As a phyſician He adminiſters relief to the maladies of my ſoul. He is *that ſun of righteouſneſs which has ariſen* upon me, *with healing on his wings.* He is an *example, a model* for my imitation, a *conductor* and *guide,* who will never forſake me in life, or in death: and to the praiſe and glory of His grace I can affirm, *that without him I can do nothing.* Let us therefore be full of thankfulneſs to God for the knowledge He has given us in this life, of the benefits reſerved for us hereafter, and conveyed by that *Word, full of grace and truth, which was made fleſh and dwelt among us, of whoſe fulneſs we have received grace for grace.*

Let me conclude the enumeration of the manifold benefits of Divine Grace, with the

recollection of the ſuccours and means of inſtruction and improvement it affords, and which ſurround me under various forms. And firſt His word, His ſacraments, and public ordinances. In His word I poſſeſs *all that is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and inſtruction in righteouſneſs.* Let me never ceaſe thankfully to acknowledge the goodneſs of Providence, who has preſerved this valuable treaſure, and tranſmitted it to me, through ſo many ages.

Nor ought I to be unmindful of thoſe authentic monuments, which the great Mediator of the new covenant eſtabliſhed in His church, for the confirmation and edification of His followers. In baptiſm, I ſee repreſented that *purification from the uncleanneſs of ſin,* which is the *end* of the evangelical covenant. In the Lord's ſupper I behold the *mean* of this purification held forth, in the *death of the Son of God.*

How great alſo is the privilege I enjoy in the appointment of miniſters and paſtors to

celebrate divine ſervice and preach and explain the word of God. How ſolemn and edifying is public worſhip, where with one heart, and one voice, an aſſembled multitude join to preſent their adorations, praiſes, and thankſgivings; their humiliations, prayers and ſupplications; to their merciful Creator, and univerſal Father; who in wiſdom and goodneſs ſet apart one day in ſeven for the ſuſpenſion of worldly cares, and the proſecution of the more important concerns of our immortal ſouls.

Such are the *general* ſuccours of divine grace, eſtabliſhed in the church of Chriſt.

What ſhall I ſay of thoſe which are *particular*, and which are conſtantly at hand, were I diſpoſed to improve them. Every valuable production of human underſtanding, every book capable of enlightening, and leading me to good, I owe in ſome meaſure to the light of the goſpel; which like that of the natural ſun, ſpreads its penetrating rays far and wide; enlightening even

thoſe

thofe who neither perceive, nor own its influence.

I muft not omit one obfervation more, before I terminate this long lift of gofpel benefits; viz. That every difpenfation in the ordinary courfe of Providence, borrows a particular and falutary efficacy from this œconomy. Suppofe, by way of illuftration, fome calamitous event, adapted to convince me of the vanity of the world; this, were I a pagan, or what is yet worfe, a chriftian without religion, whofe hopes are all centered in the world, would fill me with defolation and defpair; but affifted by the light of the gofpel this event contributes to detach me more and more from the world; and to give vigour and folidity to my future hopes. Would to God I had conftantly availed myfelf of the multiplied affiftance which Divine Grace has afforded me! how many fins fhould I have avoided, how many errors in conduct fhould I have efcaped! How many good works fhould I have performed, which alas! I have neglected; and how much

 greater

greater would have been my progreſs in ſanctification and happineſs.

Having thus concluded the review of thoſe benefits which I have hitherto received from the infinite goodneſs of God, and which excite in me *a love of gratitude;* I come now to conſider in the ſecond place the promiſe of future and eternal happineſs, which produces in me an *intereſted love.* Let not any imagine the term *intereſt* to be miſplaced here; for a ſordid intereſt, an ill directed attachment to the periſhable things of this world, is alone reprehenſible. It was this carnal ſelf intereſt with which our Lord reproached the multitudes that followed him: *verily, verily I ſay unto you, ye ſeek me, not becauſe ye ſaw the miracles, but becauſe ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.* But we do not perceive that Simon Peter met with any reproof when he ſaid, *Lord to whom ſhould we go? thou haſt the words of eternal life.* Let us therefore not fear to own that our love to God is founded on intereſt; *but by a patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for*

glory,

glory, honor, immortality, and God will beſtow upon us, *eternal life.*

Eternal life! this is the benefit yet reſerved for me! and it contains all thoſe bleſſings, which the goodneſs of my Creator will ſhower down upon me for ever and ever.

The firſt character which diſtinguiſhes the bleſſings of heaven, and which gives them ſo ſuperior a value, is, *their eternal duration.* We are told *that the things which are ſeen are temporal, but that the things which are not ſeen are eternal:* And this is alone ſufficient to give us the higheſt idea of their incomparable value. Happineſs, however exalted, or durable, cannot be perfect if it is not everlaſting; as it is conſtantly verging towards its end, and therefore will become to the poſſeſſor, but like a vain dream, which muſt forever vaniſh. Not ſuch is the perfect gift of God. He is the origin of life, and of life eternal; and will be the diſpenſer *of eternal glory, of immortality.* Secure of this promiſe, what is to me the inſtability of

earthly things? What the frailty of my body, or the ſhort ſpan of human life? for when arrived at immortality; *death with reſpect to me will be ſwallowed up in victory.*

It is worthy of obſervation on this ſubject, that ſcripture never expreſſes its magnificent promiſes by the terms *happineſs* or *felicity;* never aſſures us of *eternal happineſs,* but ſimply of *eternal life,* of immortality. The reaſon of this ſingularity may ariſe from theſe promiſes being addreſſed to poor mortals, whoſe tranſitory exiſtence here is liable to ſo many miſeries, which accompany them to the grave. To beings thus circumſtanced, a promiſe which contains an exemption from theſe afflictions, and from death; is in effect an aſſurance of perfect happineſs; for it is eaſy to conceive, that beatitude muſt be inſeparable from an eternal life, in the preſence of God. *Here, I am alienated from the life of God;* but hereafter, I ſhall be united to Him, ſhall live by His life, and be happy in His happineſs: what a reaſon is this for love!

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With relation to the nature of celeſtial happineſs, we can know but little here. It is therefore eaſier to deſcribe it negatively, by excluding all the evils with which we are acquainted; than poſſitively, by a detail of its enjoyments. We know however that they will be of an intellectual nature, that our minds will derive ſatisfaction from external objects, and from their internal feelings; that the glory of the Divine preſence will manifeſt itſelf to us, that our ſociety will be compoſed of holy and happy ſpirits, *and that where our* Saviour *is, there we ſhall be alſo.*

When I next conſider the Divine Being in Himſelf, and behold all His attributes and qualities conſiſtent with, or founded upon perfect goodneſs; it produces, thirdly, *a love of attachment.* But as I have been led in the courſe of this work to an ample detail on this ſubject, I ſhall avoid repeating what has already been ſaid. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that the higheſt conceptions we can form, fall infinitely ſhort of the excellence of the Divine Nature. If our tranquillity and

and happineſs in this world, encreaſe in proportion to our knowledge and love of Him; what muſt be the felicity of a ſtate *where we ſhall ſee Him as He is,* and where *He will be all in all.*

To conclude. My love to God is founded on *gratitude* for benefits received; it is founded on *intereſt,* becauſe connected with life and immortality; it is founded on *attachment,* becauſe it relates to a Being infinitely excellent and amiable; conſequently *infinite goodneſs is the only ſolid foundation of love.*

If it were poſſible that in the Deity, any thing inconſiſtent with goodneſs, could exiſt; were He implacable and cruel; power might make Him a juſt object of terror to His weak dependent creatures; but He could never be the object of their love. It is goodneſs alone can produce this ſentiment, even in creatures comparatively *evil.*

I come now to ſhew that this love to God, comprehends every pious and devout ſentiment, and predominates over every inferior affection. It *diſengages us from the world*, it produces an entire *ſubmiſſion to God, and confidence in Him;* it creates in us an ardent deſire to obtain His approbation and favor; whence proceeds a *ſalutary fear of offending:* on each of theſe I muſt make a few obſervations.

In the firſt place, where the love of God is founded on a conviction of His infinite goodneſs, it ſwallows up every inferior attachment, and *diſengages us from the world*; whoſe love is incompatible with it. St. John obſerves that *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* We may reverſe this propoſition and ſay, if any man love God, the love of the world is not in him; becauſe in one or other of theſe, and not in both, is happineſs to be ſought: and ſure I need not remind any one how imperfect, how unſatisfactory, how tranſient is the happineſs of this world, *at its beſt eſtate*

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it is altogether vanity. But when the love of our Creator prevails, temporal things are eſtimated according to their real value; *and our hearts are ſet on the things that are above,* where our hidden treaſure is. We may indeed with cheerfulneſs enjoy the bleſſings of life, as a wiſe traveller benefits by every comfort he meets with on the road; but we ſhall not ſuffer our journey to be impeded by them, or our ſouls to be caſt down or diſquieted by their privation. We ſhall learn with the great apoſtle, *in whatever ſtate we are, therewith to be content; how to be abaſed and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to ſuffer need.* This is the temper by which alone we can enjoy any comfort even in this world; and which will enable us to ſay at our departure out of it, *that though we walk through the dark valley of the ſhadow of death we fear no evil, for the Lord is with us, His rod and ſtaff, they comfort us.*

Secondly, if we love God for His infinite goodneſs, we muſt delight in His will; whence ariſes *perfect ſubmiſſion.* Convinced that

that His laws, and all His difpenfations are wife and good; can we have any wifh but to render Him the moft faithful and cordial obedience; the moft fincere acquiefcence and humble refignation, of which our imperfect natures are capable?

Thirdly, it is not difficult to perceive that from a love like this, *confidence in God* muft neceffarily flow. Convinced that our happinefs is in the hands of a Being, who has the will, and the power to effect it; we may repofe an unlimited and unfhaken truft in Him; and though the waves of trouble fhould roll over us; though diftreffes of every kind fhould affault us, our courage will never fail; and defpair, that worft of enemies, will never approach us, even in the moft difcouraging circumftances; *againft hope, we fhall believe in hope;* becaufe we know that our confidence, is in *the rock of ages,* who can never abandon us. How fuperior is this truft to any we fhould dare repofe in ourfelves; for where is the mortal who fhould prefume to affert that he *can never forfake*

his

his maker? The fatal and frequent experience we have had of our own weakneſs, ſhould create in us a proper diffidence, and a conſtant vigilance, but it muſt not rob us of our confidence in God, *who will do exceedingly more for us than we can aſk or think.*

Fourthly and laſtly. Where the love of God prevails, a deſire of pleaſing Him, muſt prevail alſo, and thence *a filial fear* of offending. Sentiments of gratitude for paſt benefits will make us look with deteſtation and horror, on every act that might incur His diſpleaſure. And if we are convinced that our own happineſs is promoted, or injured, in proportion as we obey, or violate His commands; we ſhall not dare to prefer our will to His. Beholding Him as a Being infinitely amiable, we ſhall deſire *to be imitators of Him as dear children;* and thence muſt naturally proceed a fear of becoming odious and hateful in His ſight, by any oppoſition to *His perfect and acceptable will.* Thus do gratitude, intereſt, and pleaſure, conſpire to penetrate the heart with a godly

fear

fear of offending, and to raiſe in us a deſire of approaching and reſembling Him, on whom our happineſs ever has, and ever muſt depend; and who is the moſt amiable and moſt excellent of beings. But if ever we ſhould deviate from the right way, *and our love ſhould wax cold;* ſhould we thence become habitual and hardened ſinners; then, as I have already ſhewn when treating the ſubject of Divine Juſtice, may we juſtly apprehend that formidable branch of perfect goodneſs; which being exempt from all weakneſs, will not relent, but pour down upon us *indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh;* from which no power in the univerſe ſhall be able to ſcreen us. Where then is the ſecurity, where the pretence which can authorize any one wilfully to offend his Maker.

These various ſentiments of piety, which I have regarded as ſo many branches of love to God; ſuch as detachment from the world, ſubmiſſion, confidence, and filial fear; theſe conſtitute a ſtate at once the moſt perfect

and happy, which is attainable on earth, and even a foretaste of celestial happiness; because they produce a state of *union with God*; a union similar in nature, though inferior in degree, with that for which our Saviour prayed to *His Father, and our Father*, in those remarkable words preceding His death; where He supplicates, not only for His disciples, but for all who should believe through their word; *that they all may be one, even as the Father was in Him and He in the Father, that so also they might be one in them.* Justly may our hearts be animated by so sublime a privilege, to disregard the perishable and childish toys of life, and to glory *that we are not of the world*, even as our Saviour *was not of the world*, but aspire at *being made perfect in one*, together with our forerunner, and now exalted Lord.

This inestimable privilege belongs only to christians; it is the gospel alone which thus unites us to God here, by the mediation of a Saviour. This is confirmed by the discourse of our Lord with His disciples, in the

the eleventh of Matthew, where he ſays, *verily I ſay unto you, that among them that are born of a woman, there hath not riſen a greater* (prophet) *than John the Baptiſt; notwithſtanding he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven* (in my church) *is greater than he.* Let us therefore rejoice in the grandeur of our vocation, as members of the church of Chriſt; let us not reſt contented with thoſe external marks of union, which can only draw upon our heads accumulated miſchief, if they do not produce a ſpiritual and vital union with God; which being began here, will go on encreaſing to perfection for ever, and ever.

Let us now examine *the ſixth conſequence, which flows from the infinite goodneſs of God, which is a diſpoſition to love our neighbour as ourſelves; in furniſhing us with the moſt powerful motives to this ſincere and univerſal charity.*

Though every ſincere Chriſtian finds reaſon to lament, that the goſpel does not pro-

duce as much good in the world as might naturally follow from its excellent inſtitutes; nevertheleſs it has ſo far enlarged the minds of men, ſince it has been diſengaged from the dreadful errors and ſuperſtitions that diſfigured it before the reformation; that none I believe will need now to be told *who is their neighbour*; they acknowledge, however their actions may deny, that their *fellow creatures*, beings of the ſame common nature, are their brethren: and this is true without diſtinction of good, or bad; friends, or enemies; believers, or unbelievers; countrymen or ſtrangers; all are our neighbours.

What then is implied *in loving all men as we do ourſelves? It is to be intereſted in their happineſs, as ſincerely as we are in our own, and for this perfect charity the love of God furniſhes us with the moſt powerful motives.* It is worthy of being remarked that this perfect, this univerſal charity, from which not even our enemies are excluded; was never equally inſiſted upon, till the goodneſs and infinite love of God to all men, was manifeſted

fefted in the gofpel; where it is given as *a new commandment.*

I do not fay however of charity, as I did *of joy, and of love to God,* that His infinite goodnefs is their only foundation; becaufe it is in the nature of man, to love his fellow beings; whence it is evident on the one hand *that man is by his nature amiable;* and on the other, *that he is by his nature good, and formed for focial love:* thefe important truths I fhall endeavour to fet in the cleareft light.

In the firft place I affert, that *the nature of man is amiable, and worthy of being loved.* I need not, in order to prove this, enter into a detail of all the noble faculties with which he is endowed; but fhall confine myfelf to that capacity of knowing, loving, and refembling his Creator; which conftitutes at once his excellence, his dignity, and his felicity. For though we often fee this capacity for holinefs and perfection, giving way to criminal and odious fentiments, and a being

amiable by his nature, become the perpetrator of atrocious crimes; neverthelefs we cannot help perceiving that this depravity, *is contrary to nature;* confequently *accidental and tranfitory*; and muft fooner or later be deftroyed, by the complete development of his excellent faculties.

But I have faid in the fecond place, *that man is by his nature good, and formed for focial love.* Many are the evidences I could bring forward in fupport of this truth, but from amongft them I fhall felect only the moft fimple and apparent.

If man is made after the Divine image; his nature muft be good, and formed *to love his neighbour as himfelf, for God is love;* therefore without goodnefs he can never refemble a Being perfectly good. He may by his intellectual powers, bear fome refemblance to his Maker, but thefe are only given to render him capable of diftinguifhing and of loving whatever is by its nature amiable

and

and excellent: he muſt therefore reſemble his heavenly Father, in his ſincere and univerſal love of his brethren.

It is true however, that in this *love* an eſſential and neceſſary difference muſt remain between God and man. An indigent and dependent creature, cannot love with the diſintereſtedneſs of a perfect and ſelf-ſufficient Creator. But though a ſenſe of his wants, and a neceſſity of ſupplying them may ſometimes deprive him of leiſure, or of means to ſhew his benevolence, by actual benefits; yet unleſs blinded and led aſtray by ſome diſorderly paſſion, it will not prevent his reſembling his Maker, by ſentiments of univerſal good-will; and ſo far will his own wants be from ſtifling his benevolence, that they will excite in him a more lively and active compaſſion for the relief of his fellow creatures. I conclude then that man is naturally inclined to goodneſs and benevolence, becauſe he is the child of God, whoſe image he bears.

The

The nature of happineſs, furniſhes us with a ſecond proof of this truth. If man is formed for happineſs, he is formed for charity. Happineſs conſiſts in the full exerciſe and development of our faculties. Now among thoſe the moſt active, the moſt lively, and the moſt delightful in its exerciſe, is the faculty of loving. The heart, is the ſeat of this faculty, and formed for love, as the eye is for ſight, and the ear for hearing. Thoſe cold, inſenſible, and unnatural hearts, whoſe love is centred in themſelves, muſt be wretched; happineſs will fly before them, and elude their eager graſp. This is the ſituation of all ſuch as ſeek their happineſs in the world, and not in God. Wealth, honors, and power, though they excite ſuch ardent deſires, have a mark of falſity ſtamped upon them, which proves the good they confer to be counterfeit, not real; for they can only yield *excluſive happineſs*, which belongs to ſome, only in conſequence of the privation of it to others; thence an oppoſition which divides mankind, gives riſe to continual wars

in public, and to diſcords and animoſities in private life, which ſtifle the natural ſentiments of charity and brotherly love; and in their ſtead place inſenſibility, diſdain, and a barbarous and inflexible cruelty, properly called *inhumanity*; and give their poſſeſſors a ſtronger reſemblance to ſavage beaſts, than to human creatures.

Far different is that happineſs for which we were deſigned; it is compoſed of true, of ſpiritual bleſſings; ſuch as the pure and lively rays of truth will afford to the mind, and virtuous ſentiments to the heart. It is a *communicative happineſs* which expands and becomes greater the more it is diffuſed. Our Saviour who was well acquainted with our nature, and with the felicity ſuited to it, has declared that it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive; as St. Paul records in the twentieth chapter of the Acts.

Beſides, in order to confirm this by repreſenting it under another, and perhaps more ſtriking point of view; man is formed for

ſociety, and muſt therefore be of a kind and benevolent nature, and inclined to love his neighbour as himſelf. That he is a ſocial being is evident from the declaration of his Maker, *who ſaid, it is not good for man to be alone*, which is true both in a phyſical, and moral ſenſe.

With *reſpect* to the *former* of theſe, ſolitude is not good for man; becauſe deſtitute of the aſſiſtance of others, he could not procure a ſupply of his wants, but muſt either periſh, or drag on a miſerable exiſtence. He is therefore formed for ſociety. But can it promote his happineſs if he is not a *ſociable being*, that is, if his heart is not naturally diſpoſed ſincerely to love his fellow-beings. Suppoſe for a moment a community among which no one was any way concerned for the welfare of the reſt; this ſociety without any bond of union, far from procuring happineſs to any one of its members, would be a horrible theatre of odious crimes, and ſhocking miſery.

That

That it is not good for man to be alone, is not leſs true, conſidered in a moral view; for ſolitude would cauſe him to feel a dreadful void; by leaving unſatisfied the greateſt, the moſt imperious of wants, a neceſſity of loving. He could neither ſoften his troubles by pouring them in the heart of a being like himſelf; nor encreaſe his enjoyments, by ſharing them; in a word, he could not fail of being miſerable. But draw him from this ſolitude, place him in a ſociety of beings like himſelf, rational, enlightened, pious and good, cemented by that charity which St. Paul calls *the bond of perfectneſs,* and he will be as completely happy as his nature will admit. The picture I have juſt drawn, is not the effect of fancy or imagination; it is a faithful, but humble ſketch of the celeſtial ſociety for which we are formed, and which we ſhall one day enjoy.

It was neceſſary thus particularly to demonſtrate the natural inclination of man to goodneſs and charity; in order to eſtabliſh that celeſtial virtue on its true foundation.

But

But it muſt be obſerved alſo that I aſſert this, as it relates to human nature in its principle, and not it that *animal* and degraded ſtate to which carnal and worldly paſſions lead. For notwithſtanding any inherent good in man, he may be, and alas! continually is, drawn aſide by the jarrings and contentions of his own temporal intereſts, with thoſe of his neighbour; and when this ſelfiſhneſs is become habitual and predominant; he is in danger of degenerating into the moſt cruel and ferocious animal in the univerſe. It is therefore neceſſary for man in order to his following his natural bent to charity, that he ſhould be freed from the ſlavery of his paſſions, for St. Paul obſerves, that *charity proceeds out of a pure heart;* to obtain this emancipation he has need of continual and powerful motives, capable of exciting him to virtue, and of ſuppreſſing every emotion of covetouſneſs, of anger, and hatred, the inſtant they ariſe in his ſoul. *If therefore we are convinced of the infinite goodneſs of the Supreme Being,*

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we ſhall find therein every poſſible motive of charity.

They may be reduced to three, as they relate to our *own intereſt, to that of our neighbour, and to charity conſidered in itſelf.*

With reſpect to the firſt of theſe, Divine Goodneſs has ſtrictly connected our particular intereſt with that of our neighbour; becauſe in requiring our ſupreme love, it produces on the one hand *an indifference to worldly objects,* and on the other makes us ſee *in our neighbour a ſecond ſelf, inſtead of a rival and competitor.*

The love of God, by *detaching us from the world,* and purifying us from carnal paſſions, deſtroys every obſtacle to charity, and leaves it to flow in an uninterrupted courſe. The happineſs of others becomes neceſſary in order to our own, and we deſire it with equal ſincerity. Thus our intereſts become ſo ſtrictly united, that in labouring to promote

mote thoſe of our neighbour, we are inevitably advancing our own.

Placing the ſupreme affection of our ſouls on a Being whoſe adorable goodneſs renders Him the object of our love, we cannot fail of ſeeing in our neighbour a ſecond ſelf, *for he who loveth God, loveth his brother alſo.* Can we love God for the multitude of His tender mercies, and take no intereſt in, or concern for, the creatures who are the objects of them? This is impoſſible. We may therefore conclude that we do not love God aright, if we do not love our neighbour as ourſelves.

If in the exerciſe of our charity we ſhould be called to conſiderable and painful ſacrifices; ſhould our poſſeſſions, our repoſe, our health, or even our lives be required of us; we ſhall certainly ſtand in need of powerful encouragements, thus totally to forego all our temporal intereſts, for the ſake of others. But the infinite goodneſs of God is ſtill motive ſufficient; for it aſſures us we

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ſhall be gainers by every action in which we ſeek to approve ourſelves to Him.

The abſolute manner in which charity is commanded, the glorious promiſes by which it is enforced, and the dreadful menaces placed around it as a ſacred guard, to prevent its violation; ſhew it to be moſt acceptable to God, and abſolutely neceſſary for our happineſs; ſince *He has in His infinite goodneſs connected our intereſt with thoſe of our fellow creatures.*

The ſecond motive for charity relates to our neighbour, *whom the infinite goodneſs of the Deity makes us behold as an object worthy of love.* Are we not endowed with ſimilar natures, partakers of the ſame celeſtial vocation, objects of the ſame love, and ſharers in the ſame redemption? We need therefore only conſider our neighbour as an equal partner with us in the love and favor of God, and as a brother and companion in future felicity; in order to experience fervent charity.

But

But ſhould our neighbour be our enemy, ſhould his hatred incline him to ſeek our injury; muſt we then forget our own intereſts to advance thoſe of an implacable and cruel foe? The knowledge we have of God reſolves this queſtion, by ſhewing us, what is indeed *our true intereſt*; it teaches us to view our bittereſt enemy, as an inſtrument in His hand, incapable of proceeding farther than He ſhall permit. We may, by every lawful means, preſerve ourſelves from the effects of his malice, as we would avoid ſickneſs, or any other calamity; but by keeping our eye fixed on the adorable goodneſs of the Firſt Cauſe; we ſhall never give way to the bitterneſs of reſentment, but ſhall behold the blindneſs and wickedneſs of our enemy, with the compaſſion it deſerves; for of all the unhappy beings that cover the earth, none ought more to excite pity, than the wicked. Poor, wretched creatures! ſlaves to the worſt of maſters, their own horrid paſſions, and engaged, as the wiſe man obſerves, *in a deceitful work*; ſhall not we, beings of the ſame nature, and liable to the

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ſame errors, feel our hearts melt with compaſſion for creatures *who know not what they do?* No other ſentiment can poſſibly become us.

The wickedneſs and cruelty of our enemy, by exciting our compaſſion, enables us to ſee him, as God himſelf beholds him. Odious and deteſtable as his preſent ſtate of vice render him; yet when the means Divine Wiſdom ſhall employ for his correction and amendment, ſhall have produced their effect; when he is waſhed and purified, he will become our companion in eternal felicity. At preſent he perſecutes and injures us; but a time will certainly come, when he will do us juſtice, and make us ample amends. Far then from being ever *overcome of evil,* let us reſolve *to overcome evil with good;* and in the true ſpirit of chriſtianity; if our enemy hunger *let us feed him, if he thirſt let us give him drink*; thus ſhall our charitable treatment melt down his reſentment, as coals heaped on the head of a crucible, deſolve the metal it contains: we

muſt, therefore, according to the command of our Saviour, return bleſſing for curſing, and pray for our enemies. Such are the powerful motives, with which the infinite goodneſs of God furniſhes us, for the love of our fellow creatures; even for the wicked, and our implacable enemies.*

I come now to conſider, thirdly, *charity in itſelf, as the moſt excellent and glorious virtue that can poſſibly adorn our nature.* Sentiments of kindneſs, of brotherly love, and charity, are ſuch as can alone conſtitute any reſemblance between the human, and Divine nature. Deſtitute of them, can we hope

* It may not be improper here to remind the reader, in order to ſhew the exalted effects of true chriſtianity; that the author of this work was moſt unjuſtly and cruelly perſecuted, by a ſet of narrow-minded men; degraded, depoſed, and in conſequence deprived of ſubſiſtance, and driven from his family and country: we nevertheleſs ſee him, not only free from reſentment for ſuch unmerited injuries; but full of forgiveneſs and charity towards his enemies; and of a benevolence to all, which is not confined to their temporal intereſt.

hope to bear any likeneſs to a Being *who is love.* Were we even poſſeſſed of every other virtue, what analogy could be found in a creature, whoſe ſole care, attention and purſuits were confined to his own intereſts; and a Being whoſe delight is to ſhower down on all happineſs and joy; doing good even *to the evil and unthankful?* Where, amidſt the immenſe univerſe, could ſuch a being be placed to find happineſs? In ſolitude he would be deſtitute, forlorn, and miſerable; and in ſociety he would be an unwelcome, and unhappy intruder.

But when on the contrary our heart is enlarged by charity, which makes us ſincerely deſire, and zealouſly purſue every opportunity of promoting the happineſs of our fellow creatures; then it is that we reſemble the beſt of Beings, that we bear His image, and that in our meaſure and degree, we are *merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful,* or as St. Matthew expreſſes the words of our Saviour, *that we are perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect.*

It will be obvious to all who are converſant with ſcripture, that as among the Divine perfections, goodneſs and mërcy, are the moſt frequently and ſtrongly mentioned; ſo no virtue is ſo largely commended, or ſo ſtrongly enforced as charity: I requeſt my reader to peruſe the thirteenth chapter of the firſt of Corinthians, which contains a deſcription of charity, and gives it the preeminence over every other virtue. Let us alſo collect ſome of the moſt remarkable texts on that ſubject. The firſt of which is taken from the above-mentioned chapter, we cannot carry our ſubmiſſion to the Divine will farther, *than in giving our body to be burned;* and nevertheleſs this act *will profit us nothing* if we are deſtitute of charity: diſqualified for a ſociety of ſpirits who dwell in perfect love, we ſhall be excluded, and have our portion with the reprobate. How poſitively does this deciſion ſhew, that we cannot be acceptable to God, without charity.

The end and deſign of the goſpel diſpenſation is our *purification from all iniquity.* But

But wherein consists this important change? St. Paul informs us, *that the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart:* this is the end of the gospel; and if love prevail in our hearts, we shall be workers together with God in His great plan of universal salvation; for we shall desire happiness to be extended, and labour to promote it. But while our minds are strangers to these benevolent desires, while they are cold and indifferent to the interests of others; we may be assured that this happy change, this renovation of mind, is not yet wrought in us; and that whatever may be the virtues to which we make pretence, we are tares in the field, whose portion is to be burned. But when the gospel, which sets forth the infinite goodness of God, has enflamed our hearts with charity to our neighbour; then are we such as He would have us to be, and prepared for a communion with the God of charity; in a word, we are *the wheat which will be gathered into His garner.*

The laſt example I mean to cite in favor of this divine virtue, we meet with in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew from the thirty-firſt verſe to the end.

After having peruſed the awful and intereſting picture of a future judgment which it contains; let us reflect for a few moments upon a ſcene at which we ſhall every one be preſent: *for we muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt*, there to receive the glorious ſentence of abſolution and pardon, or of condemnation and puniſhment. We ſee that we ſhall be judged ſolely concerning our *charity*, and acquitted or condemned, in proportion as we have cultivated, or ſuppreſſed this moſt excellent of virtues. We are told by St. James that *if we fulfil the royal law, according to the ſcriptures, and love our neighbour as ourſelves; we do well.* This is the law of our judge, by which we ſhall be tried; becauſe it was *His great, His new*, His ſpecial commandment: *For he that loveth his brother, abideth in light, and there is none occaſion of ſtumbling in him:* for every

every one *that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

In the ſentence which our celeſtial King, our divine Judge will iſſue from His glorious throne, let us obſerve the tenderneſs of charity, tempering the authority of a ſovereign maſter. He places the leaſt and meaneſt of the human race, among His brethren; and ſpeaks of the ſmalleſt office of charity granted, or refuſed them, as if immediately regarding Himſelf. How affecting is the idea, that whenever we *miniſter to the neceſſities* of a poor mortal, our Saviour conſiders the benefit as if done to himſelf. Let us not loſe ſight of this truth, and we ſhall never refuſe to ſuccour the diſtreſſed; or wiſh to evade any opportunity of doing them all the good in our power.

Deſcend, O divine charity! animate our hearts with thy celeſtial flame; form our perfection, conſtitute our delight, and render us acceptable to the God of charity; before whom deſtitute of thee, we are nothing.

Come and unite us forever to the greatest and best of Beings, and to his living image, our benevolent Redeemer. Render us merciful, that we may obtain mercy; teach us sincerely to forgive, even until seventy times seven, that we may receive the pardon of our innumerable offences. Sublime delightful virtue, thou shalt never fail, but shalt form the blessedness of the blessed, and be a river of pleasure of which they shall drink for ever in the glorious abodes of heaven.

I quit with regret this delightful subject, which has furnished matter for my sixth and last consequence, drawn from the infinite goodness of God; and I flatter myself, I have made it appear *that the knowledge of the perfect goodness of the Divine Nature, contains every possible motive that can lead us to love our neighbour as ourselves.* I have shewn the union of interest that subsists among mankind; the amiableness and excellence of human nature; and lastly the attractive beauty and dignity of charity in itself, as the most glorious virtue that can adorn an intellectual

tellectual being, and without which, it is impoſſible to be happy in any ſtate.

I have now completed what I propoſed on this ſubject. But ſhould the providence of God ſpare my life, I truſt I ſhall yet be able to accompliſh a more extenſive plan of which this treatiſe, though detached and complete in itſelf, may be conſidered as the foundation. My future diſquiſitions will have for their object *the animal and ſpiritual nature of man. Their univerſal ſalvation, and the knowledge of the truth neceſſary thereto.* And laſtly, *the revelation of trath both in a natural and ſuper-natural way.*

In what I have ſaid I have adhered to my promiſe of drawing proofs from reaſon and ſcripture for every thing I have advanced; and am able to declare, in the preſence of Him, before whoſe tribunal I muſt account for every action; that I have not endeavoured to impoſe any thing on the faith of others which I do not believe true, on theſe two great foundations.

This leads me to a very important obſervation on the wonderful and incomparable excellence of holy writ. In the courſe of this work I have touched on a multitude of ſublime truths, reſulting from the Divine perfections, the wonders of providence and grace diſplayed in the government of His creatures; and on ſome abſtruſe and difficult queſtions, in all which I have been aſſiſted by the light of revelation; which bears diſtinguiſhed marks of divinity in its *ſimplicity*, becauſe addreſſed to all men; and nevertheleſs in its *ſublimity*, becauſe it treats of the *wonderful works of God*. When we conſider that this ſacred volume containing the old and new teſtament, was penned at a period when all the nations of the world, were with reſpect to the knowledge of the true God, plunged in the moſt profound ignorance; that it was written amidſt a people devoted to huſbandry, without commerce, without letters, without ſcience; more ignorant and illiterate than any we read of among civilized nations; and that it was compoſed at different periods during the ſpace of fifteen or

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ſixteen centuries, by near thirty different authors, between whom long intervals of years intervened: nevertheleſs, examine their writings, and obſerve how they ſpeak relative to God, to His works, to His providence, to His diſpenſations, and to His laws; and it will not only appear, that perfect harmony reigns amongſt them; but that they treat all thoſe ſublime ſubjects with the ſame dignity, and perſpicuity; in a manner ſuited to the majeſty of the Divine nature, and to the frailty, the wants, and the deſires of mortality: inſomuch that the excellence and utility of the ſcriptures, have been allowed by thoſe who rejected their divinity. But whence in the nation, time, and circumſtances above mentioned, could ariſe ſuch ſublime knowledge of God, and of His ways? Whence a ſyſtem of ethics ſo incomparably ſuperior to any of the moſt celebrated pagan writers? ſurely we muſt acknowledge this to be the *finger of God*, and this volume of ſacred truth, as much His work, as the world we inhabit; becauſe without his aſſiſtance its exiſtence is

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as inconceivable as would be, that of the universe.

That the Supreme Being is perfectly good, is so capital and interesting a truth, that the whole of religion hangs upon it. When I am assured that goodness is the foundation, and happiness the end of all the ways of God, to myself and every creature; hope is the anchor of my soul, sure and stedfast; for though *His ways should be in the deep, and His paths in the mighty waters;* though I should experience every external evil; no affliction shall shake my confidence, never will I dishonor, by a moments mistrust, a Being who has in mercy commanded me *to cast all my care upon Him;* because *He careth for me.*

But if I entertain any doubts on this subject, by the admission of any doctrine incompatible with it, alas! in losing this assurance, I have lost my all; and religion presents nothing to my mind but terror and desolation. The prospect of futurity fills

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me with alarm, and immortality diſtracts me. The greateſt of Beings, without perfect goodneſs, is no longer an object infinitely amiable to me; and together with the love of God muſt every pious ſentiment expire. Should charity remain, becauſe the native inmate of my being, alas! it could only aggravate and inſure my miſery. So true is it *that the whole of religion depends on the doctrine of the infinite goodneſs of God.*

And if religion is thus founded, it muſt follow of neceſſity, *that every doctrine incompatible with goodneſs is falſe, abſurd, and even pernicious and fatal to the laſt degree.* I have therefore in the whole of this treatiſe, in eſtabliſhing the doctrine of perfect goodneſs, and following it in its conſequences; conſtantly combated ſuch erroneous opinions, as repreſent the Creator of the human race, as a Being whoſe power will be employed in inflicting never ending torments on a conſiderable portion of his creatures, and have eſtabliſhed the non-eternity of future torments. Let not mankind be induced

induced to ſuppreſs this truth, from any apprehended abuſe of it; becauſe this is tacitly to deny, that it is *the will of God that all men ſhould come to the knowledge of the truth*; and to affirm, that ſome are beſt conducted to ſalvation by ignorance, and error. It is alſo to aſſert that in order to produce the love of God in the heart of man, He muſt be repreſented to them as a Being infinitely cruel. But leſt ſinners ſhould abuſe this truth ſo ill underſtood, it is neceſſary it ſhould be rightly explained to them; that they may not give themſelves up to fatal illuſions, either reſpecting the ſeverity, or the mercy of God. O God! Thou Being ſupremely good! cauſe the precious ray of Thy truth to illuminate every heart, that they may be filled with Thy love and Thy fear; and to effect this, *open the lips* of thy miniſters, *that they may ſhew forth thy praiſe.* Amen.

F I N I S.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASW